



**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS**

***Growth Visioning for Sustaining A
Livable Region***

Visioning Case Studies
10 Regions In the US

***Summary Report
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The Planning Center • Southern California Transportation &
Land Use Coalition



SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

Preface

Visioning is a tool that has gained widespread attention as a method of stimulating rethinking about how the future might be shaped in neighborhoods, communities and regions. It involves identifying desirable – as opposed to merely projected -- future conditions and stimulating change to realize that future image, typically drawing upon “smart growth” strategies and techniques to the extent that they can be applied.

The SCAG Regional Council has approved and budgeted a major new Regional Growth Visioning program. Process development is now underway, with development of the initial vision targeted for completion in 2003. It is intended to serve as a foundation for the forthcoming 2004 RTP Update and RHNA process. Perhaps as important, the intent of an agreed-upon regional vision is to develop a broader understanding of the long-term consequences of our regional growth dynamics and identify common ground regarding how an improved quality of life for the people of this region can be achieved as that growth occurs.

The SCAG visioning program is currently divided into three phases. Phase I, initiated in February 2001 and targeted for completion in August 2001, involves a seven-month effort, led by SCAG’s Growth Visioning Subcommittee, to design a regional visioning process. Phase II, in fiscal year 2001/2002 will involve actually conducting the process designed during Phase I (although there will be some overlap with Phase I.) This work will proceed both at the subregional and regional levels. Phase III will occur largely between July 2002 and January 2003. In this phase, the work products produced within the subregions will be integrated into the regional growth visioning framework.

The materials that follow summarize the research effort undertaken by the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition (SCTLC) as a key component of SCAG’s Phase I work program for the Growth Visioning effort. As part of The Planning Center’s team undertaking the Phase I Program Design effort for SCAG, SCTLC researched visioning efforts undertaken in other regions throughout the United States. Both SCAG and its consultants can now consider and benefit from the lessons learned in other visioning efforts as the work of designing SCAG’s program gets underway.

SCTLC attempted to answer the following questions about each effort they investigated:

1. What initiated the Visioning Effort? When did it begin?
2. What are the region’s physical, geographic, political and other characteristics?
3. Who led the process, and what stakeholders were involved?
4. What are the funding sources and levels?
5. What data was available to the effort/What extent of data gathering took place?
6. What are the major phases or components and what is their status?
7. What has resulted from the visioning effort thus far (quantitative and/or qualitative)?
8. What are the lessons learned?
9. What obstacles did the effort overcome and how?
10. What were the effort’s strengths and weaknesses?
11. What features are most adaptable to SCAG Region’s process and why?

The results of SCTLC’s research are encapsulated in the following summaries and narrative descriptions of ten visioning efforts in the United States, as well as a matrix summarizing the salient characteristics of each effort.

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Vision 2020 – Atlanta Summary

What They Did

The Atlanta Regional Council undertook a two-phase visioning effort that included over 1,150 stakeholders in their region, got widespread media attention, and extensive citizen input. The entire effort ran from 1991 to 1997.

Who Led It

The Steering Committee consisted of 15 regional leaders, chaired by a former Governor of Georgia. Ten Collaboratives were then formed around particular issue areas, many of which were chaired by acknowledged leaders in their issue area. Elected officials were not very involved in the effort.

The Process in a Nutshell

12. *Foundation Laying.* Selected a Steering Committee, considered a baseline analysis, discussed a future scenario, held a couple of retreats, and did extensive public outreach.
13. *Transition to Visioning Process.* Near the end of the first phase, a televised town hall was aired, a newspaper supplement appeared with a citizen preference survey (that garnered over 10,000 responses), and a conference reporting on the future scenarios developed to that point was held.
14. *Visioning.* Ten “Collaboratives” were formed, which were essentially stakeholder-based issue groups to determine a future scenario on each issue. They held a year’s worth of meetings, were responsible for gathering their own data, and were chaired by regional leaders for each issue.
15. *The Vision.* Near the end of this phase, another televised town hall was held, a larger newspaper supplement entitled “The Regional Dialogue” appeared, and the recommendations from each Collaborative were hammered into 41 initiatives in 11 categories, with responsibility for implementation on each initiative being assumed by various outside groups.
16. *Implementation/Action.* Action Planning Teams and an Implementation Committee were formed to continue the vision. The 1998 RTP and Regional Development Plan were put together into one document titled “Detailing the Vision.”

Results

1. Vision 2020 still serves as the basis for the MPO’s planning documents.
2. New Quality Growth planning tools are being developed inspired by the visioning process.
3. About half of the 41 initiatives have had some sort of implementation progress and more are planned shortly. Details on those initiatives are forthcoming.

Lessons

1. *Get the local media institutionally involved.* The media should be *institutionally* involved in the effort – not just covering it. In Atlanta, this helped raise the effort’s profile considerably.

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2. *Lay the foundation.* Atlanta realized that a significant amount of groundwork had to be laid for the effort to be successful. By the time they started organizing actual visioning process, people were anxious to get it going.
3. *Use good data.* The Collaboratives had to provide their own data, and the MPO only provided a basic baseline scenario. This lack of quantitative information frustrated many stakeholders.
4. *Set up a sustaining structure.* One thing that has made implementation ad hoc is the lack of any internal or external sustaining organization to maintain focus on the objectives within the Vision. This is a very important step to keep the Vision vital and evolving.

* The Full Narrative also contains a further explanation of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, which has broad land use and transportation powers in the Atlanta region.

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VISION 2020 ATLANTA

More than conversation, less than concrete action

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) claims that it undertook the “largest community-based long-range planning effort ever conducted in the country” ... and they may be right. High profile CEOs, non-profit heads, community leaders, issue-based advocates, media outlets, and others played a prominent role in this effort. Entire special sections of the newspaper were devoted to it, TV stations aired live meetings, regional leaders devoted significant time to it, and a number of actions were called for. Yet, for all this talk and while some action has been taken, coherent implementation of the vision is difficult to ascertain. Is that success? Yes ... and no.

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) produces a Regional Development Plan every ten years. An update was planned for the early '90s when the Executive Director of the MPO decided that a much broader visioning effort should inform development of the plan. In addition, the Regional Leadership Institute, a leadership training program which has a fairly high profile in the Atlanta region, was using national consensus building models as part of its curriculum, and many of its alumni championed Vision 2020.

The foundation-laying work for Vision 2020 began in mid-1991. The actual “visioning” began in mid-1994 and was finished in late 1995 with 41 individual initiatives. An implementation committee worked from 1995 to 1997 to develop implementation strategies for each initiative, leading to the 1998 RTP update. While the Vision continues to be referred to and individual initiatives continue to be carried out, the official visioning effort is now completed.

The Georgia Regional Transportation Regional Authority was created in 1999 that links transportation with land use in a very real, “carrot and stick” way. Although not officially part of the visioning process, more will be said about that at the end of this summary.

2. Regional characteristics

The ARC region consists of 10 counties, 64 cities (including Atlanta), 48 “superdistricts” and 3.2 million people – the region has grown nearly 30% in the last ten years and is projected to grow by over 40% in the next ten years. Average speeds are projected to decrease from 25.7 to 20.2 mph; they also project that VMT increases will flatten, but that Vehicle Hours Traveled will increase significantly. In other words, Atlanta faces many of the same problems of Los Angeles ... their problems have merely arisen later and more quickly.

The political issues in Atlanta are similar to Los Angeles – a spread out metropolis, a spread out civic infrastructure, a spread out everything. The key difference is that Atlanta has always had a strong and involved business community (Coke, CNN, etc.) and a fairly strong set of regional leaders. This certainly helped the visioning effort in its early days.

3. The players

The effort was initially spearheaded by the MPO’s Executive Director, who made a crucial early decision to get a former Governor – and recognized regional leader – to Chair the visioning exercise.

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This helped them attract a number of other regional leaders from a variety of sectors, including agency heads, foundations, business leaders, nonprofits, cultural institutions and others.

The Steering Committee consisted of 15 very high level people – a number of high-profile CEOs, high profile Foundation heads, environmental leaders, State Cabinet Secretaries and the like. The Steering Committee then appointed Initiating Committees – small groups of influential people who helped appoint the “Collaboratives”, which were issue-based groups who would be spearheading the actual vision development. The Collaboratives were chaired by credible leaders within each subject area. By the end, over 1,150 stakeholders participated in one of the working groups.

4. Funding sources and levels

This effort was funded by the MPO, foundation funds, and corporate contributions. The MPO's Executive Director spearheaded the fundraising effort. Roughly \$1.1 million was spent on the effort with an additional \$800,000 in in-kind donations – media services, meeting coordination, and the like. A breakdown of specific funding levels from specific sources is no longer available, but the MPO's contribution seems to be mostly in the form of staff time and data provision. Most of the direct costs were borne by the outside sources.

5. Data availability/gathering

According to ARC staff, Vision 2020 was not a very data-intensive process. However, the early work of the Steering Committee was informed by baseline projections as well as potential future growth scenarios developed by ARC staff. Interestingly, these future scenarios were brought in early and mostly used as jumping off points for broader discussion, instead of an end point in and of themselves.

In addition, before the actual “visioning” effort started, an extensive period of public outreach resulted in a broad vision being published, detailing particular ideas and citizen sentiments on a variety of issues, but this was not a data-driven, quantitative document – it was a qualitative view that helped inform the more rigorous visioning process.

6. Major phases/components

Phase I: Laying the Groundwork. Mid-1991 – mid-1994

July to December 1991 was spent forming the Steering Committee, hiring a consultant, and announcing the Vision 2020 kickoff. 1992 was spent conducting a survey of local and national experts on growth visioning issues, refining initial alternative future scenarios, preparing for public outreach. During this period, they prepared a range of future growth alternatives as “baselines” for future refinement.

The first half of 1993 was spent doing intense public outreach about the various future growth scenarios and visions. Speakers fanned out throughout the region (over 90 presentations were made through the Vision 2020 Speakers' Bureau), a televised town hall meeting was held, a citizen survey and newspaper supplement appeared in four of the region's leading newspapers, an opinion survey was undertaken, and 23 Community Forums were held. The newspaper survey appeared in two foreign language newspapers and Atlanta's two leading dailies; in addition, the Atlanta Journal & Constitution included it in a regular mailing to non-subscribers. Altogether, the supplement reached 1.5 million households. The survey could be returned by mail or dropped off at any branch of a local convenience store chain – 10,000 surveys were returned. This phase was as much to build support for the visioning process as it was to get feedback on initial future growth scenarios.

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The first publication, “A Shared Vision for the Atlanta Region” was published in May 1993. The second half of 1993 was spent training regional leaders, stakeholders, and others who would eventually lead the visioning process in community collaboration. The National Civic League played a prominent role in this.

In the first half of 1994, Initiating Committees of high level people were formed who suggested appointees to the ten “Collaboratives” – issue-based Subcommittees who would spearhead the actual visioning process.

Phase II: Undertaking the Process. Mid-1994 – mid 1995

In mid-1994, consultants were hired to facilitate the collaborative process, and a conference was held to release baseline information, alternative scenarios discussed to that point, and kick off the collaborative meetings. The ten Collaboratives began meeting in June 1994 to determine action items within their issue area. Interestingly, the Collaboratives were responsible for gathering much of their own data throughout the process.

After a year of meetings, a Regional Congress, and a second televised town hall meeting, the leaders of all ten Collaboratives came together in May 1995 to finalize their recommendations. In June, a more extensive newspaper supplement called “The Regional Dialogue” appeared along with a second public opinion survey.

During the summer, action and implementation teams were formed and the final vision was prepared. In September 1995, the final vision was published: “A Community’s Vision Takes Flight”, containing 41 individual initiatives, each of which had an individual sponsor responsible for implementation.

Post-vision implementation

From 1995 to 1997, ARC set up an implementation committee to determine strategies to operationalize the vision. This led to the 1998 RTP update and the Regional Development Plan, which were both explicit outcomes of Vision 2020 – in fact, they were titled “Detailing the Vision.” The 2000 RTP update was also based on Vision 2020, but wasn’t as directly an outcome of it. The Implementation Committee also approved progress benchmarks during this time.

7. Results

41 Initiatives

The Vision spelled out 41 separate action initiatives in eleven separate categories, with the responsibility for implementation taken by a variety of outside groups -- not the MPO. After one year, progress had been made on 11 of the initiatives, but these initiatives continue to be implemented by various groups who have worked them into their own work plans and strategic goals. More details on which initiatives have been actually implemented are forthcoming.

Community Choices Process/Quality Growth Tools

The MPO is also currently undertaking a community choices process, which will provide tools to communities and local elected officials to implement “smart growth” policies and programs. Also, a Quality Growth Partnership has been formed, which is working with the MPO to give their RTP and Regional Development Plan a “smart growth” orientation. Although these are not direct outgrowths of Vision 2020, the MPO considers this a de facto “Phase 3” of the process.

Increased Dialogue and Awareness

While qualitative, it is worthwhile to mention this as an outcome. Nearly 85% of the process participants felt that the process would be somewhat or very influential on the issues involved. 64%

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thought it had accomplished something significant, and 78% said that the new viewpoints they became more familiar with would inform their future work. In other words, while the direct results of visioning efforts are always debatable, this one seems to have had a measurable impact on regional attitudes.

Regional Involvement

This is another “soft” result that is worth mentioning. An extraordinarily broad group of people and stakeholder groups were involved with this effort. When business leaders, foundation heads, community activists, environmental advocates, elected officials, governmental agency heads, media outlets (both electronic and print), and City officials are involved in the same effort, it can safely be said that a dialogue was created that didn’t exist before. This, in and of itself, is quite an achievement.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Weak civic infrastructure – While Atlanta has a fairly strong business community, its civic infrastructure overall is fairly weak – there was not a problem solving mechanism that could simply be geared up for action. They overcame this by being very strategic about who they chose to lead the effort, and by doing an extraordinary foundation-building process leading up to the actual visioning effort itself.

Budget – While the MPO spearheaded this effort and the Executive Director personally championed the early stages of the effort, it was clear early on that the MPO did not have the resources necessary to undertake the scale and scope of the effort they envisioned. They overcame this through the direct involvement of their Executive Director, who secured funding from a variety of outside sources.

Lack of elected official buy-in – Local elected officials maintained a fair amount of distance from this process, even though senior staff of the MPO was integrally involved and many private sector leaders led various aspects of the effort. They never overcame this to a significant extent, which helped make immediate action surrounding the vision difficult to ascertain.

Strengths

Inclusiveness – Atlanta’s visioning process is one of the most inclusive. Over 1,150 people actually participated in the process, not counting public meetings and attendees. ARC calls it the “largest community-based long-range planning effort ever conducted in the country” ... and they may be right.

Media Partnerships – The Atlanta media was a strong partner in this effort, and that was a conscious choice on the part of Vision 2020’s organizers. Two separate newspaper supplements, one of which was virtually a special section, with returnable surveys in each one not only allowed them to get feedback, but to reach a broad range of citizens. The televised town halls were also an effective means of outreach.

Foundation Laying – By the time the visioning process got underway, so much groundwork had been laid that people were actually anxious to get to the process of actually developing the vision. They had also gotten a wide variety of feedback on what issues should be addressed, helping them ensure that the “Collaboratives” were organized around the right themes.

Leadership buy-in – High profile business leaders, foundation heads, environmentalists, and governmental leaders took this effort seriously, devoting their time, resources, and personal credibility to the effort. And they were mostly the right leaders – CEOs and Executive Directors of well-known,

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credible institutions. This brought invaluable attention and participation from a much broader range of people.

Weaknesses

Focus on process – In many ways, the process is the most important part of any visioning effort ... yet Atlanta focused on process almost to a fault, so that when it came time for the “Collaboratives” to finish their work, they weren’t sure what they were supposed to end up with. Hence, hundreds of recommendations became a somewhat ad hoc list of 41 initiatives in 11 categories.

Lack of data – One glaring fact about Vision 2020 is how little data was involved or provided by ARC staff. The Collaboratives were in charge of producing their own data – meaning that volunteer stakeholders were responsible for producing data, with predictably varying levels of availability and reliability. Many stakeholders discussed the need for more objective, comprehensive data.

Lack of sustaining organization – There has been no institutional structure that has carried the vision forward – all the outside Committees have disbanded and no internal Committee or working group has been formed to continue implementation. Therefore, the Vision’s implementation is ad hoc, depending on outside groups’ resources and willingness to pursue the objectives they took responsibility for.

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

ARC’s Vision 2020 effort was an extraordinarily ambitious one that does seem to have permeated the consciousness of the region ... but did not result in any sort of coherent, organized implementation plan. Some lessons for SCAG:

Don’t shortchange the quantitative needs – Visioning is, by nature, qualitative -- and that qualitative nature cannot be shied away from. However, in order for the visioning to be meaningful, it has to be based on trustworthy, comprehensive information and data.

Get the media onboard – The media is a crucial partner in these efforts. Where possible, the institutional structure of the media outlets must be approached to create partnerships. It’s not enough to pitch reporters – editors and executives must be part of the mix.

Know where you’re going – Any visioning effort must be flexible and will inevitably evolve. However, having a strong sense of what the vision is leading to will help ensure the vision evolve into something ultimately useful. Agreement on the purpose of the visioning effort might be its own phase.

Lay the foundation – Different regions need different amounts and kinds of foundation laying. Atlanta needed to engender a significant amount of support for a visioning effort and did not shy away from that. Visioning is not a “quick fix” or a “magic bullet” – and charging forward without laying the foundation is throwing good money after bad.

Although largely completed over three years ago, the jury is still out on the effectiveness of Atlanta’s visioning effort. Some are frustrated that such a large effort did not go farther, faster. Others are heartened by the fact that various initiatives suggested by the effort are still being implemented. However, the bottom line is that few visioning efforts turn into directly implementable action. The process and the conversation are inevitably part of the outcome.

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*** A note about GRTA**

Atlanta has received a fair amount of national attention because of the formation of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) which provides unprecedented power to a regional agency over transportation and land use.

In 1996, Atlanta became a severe non-attainment area for air quality. In 1997, they started losing federal transportation funding. In 1998, a group of business leaders banded together to form the Metropolitan Atlanta Transportation Initiative (MATI) and hired a consultant to determine the best way to put together a transportation plan that would meet conformity standards.

After a national survey of other MPOs and transportation planning agencies, the consultant recommended seven initiatives, of which one was that all transportation planning needs to be centralized.

Largely due to MATI's findings, newly elected Governor Barnes formed GRTA in 1999, essentially signing over his transportation powers to GRTA's 15 Board members. The Legislature granted GRTA broad powers, including the power to issue \$1 billion in revenue bonds and \$1 billion in general revenue bonds with legislative permission. In addition, GRTA's approval is required for local transportation plans. Finally, they must approve or deny projects proposed by the Georgia Department of Transportation in their region.

On the land use front, GRTA approval is required for "Developments of Regional Impact" -- large development projects that will theoretically affect Atlanta's transportation pattern. If GRTA vetoes a certain project, the local Council must override the veto with a $\frac{3}{4}$ supermajority. In addition, the Board sits as the Governor's Development Council and, in that capacity, they have responsibility for ensuring that local governments meet State land use planning requirements.

Because of their bond issuing authority, if GRTA finds that a particular City is subverting regional development patterns (i.e., not accepting their share of housing, over-retailing, building solely auto-based transportation projects), they can withhold funds.

This arrangement has, frankly, scared many cities fearing that level of State-level "intervention." And certainly GRTA has been controversial in Atlanta. However, it is the classic carrot and stick approach -- cities that consider the larger region in their local plans and cooperate with their neighbors get money; those that don't, don't.

Finally, the relationship between ARC and GRTA is still being hammered out and will likely evolve as it goes. At this point, GRTA has legislative power over various plans and projects, whereas ARC has the responsibility to develop plans, manage various processes and, in some cases, implement.

It took an extraordinary level of gubernatorial power -- and the fact that they were being penalized by the feds -- to make GRTA come about. It remains unlikely that, wise or unwise, this model will be replicated very widely.

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Vision 2030 – Baltimore Summary

What They're Doing

The Baltimore Metropolitan Council is just beginning a comprehensive, bottom-up process of developing a vision for the region, to be implemented in 10-year increments. They began the process under pressure from area residents and the Federal Highway Administration.

Who's Leading It

A Steering Committee of 35 people from the public and private sectors have been invited to participate. No elected officials will serve on this Committee. The MPO has also set up an internal Management and Coordination Committee to tackle cross-cutting issues.

The Process in a Nutshell (Planned, not executed)

1. *Key Participants.* They will begin by holding focus groups with key participants in growth management in the region – this will be an “insider’s perspective” step.
2. *Stakeholders.* They will then broaden these focus groups out to include a broader array of people involved with “smart growth” issues – this is a “stakeholder’s perspective” step.
3. *Subcommittees.* Four subcommittees will be formed to address issues of environment, equity, economic development, and governance. They will each address the same set of questions, to be developed out of the first two steps.
4. *Scenario development.* A round of public meetings will then attempt to hammer this qualitative input into alternative growth scenarios.
5. *Telephone Survey.* They will then do a statistically valid survey of the values of regional residents. This feedback will be used to provide particular emphasis within the scenarios.
6. *Community Choices Process.* This is the centerpiece. Involving everyone from local elected officials to community leaders, a preferred growth scenario and vision will be developed, using the original scenarios, survey results, and stakeholder feedback to guide the discussion.

Results

1. *They are just getting underway, the results are still to come.* However, the MPO's leadership is already championing the effort and they have hired a former County planning manager to direct it internally.

Lessons

1. *Early leadership is important.* The new Chair of the MPO, in his first public message in that post, said that Vision 2030 was their most important effort over the next 18-24 months. This sets an important tone.

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2. *Legislation is not enough.* Even in a State where “smart growth” is part of the common vernacular and a variety of State efforts are underway, the need for a broad, regional vision still became apparent.
3. *Strong jurisdictions must buy in early.* Baltimore has a very strong County governance system. If the MPO would have attempted to undertake this without their early buy in to its legitimacy, the effort would have died on the vine. Identifying the important players and jurisdictions and getting them on board early is a requirement.

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Vision 2030 Baltimore

Why do visioning in the State where the term “smart growth” was invented?

The Baltimore Metropolitan Council is beginning an ambitious, region-wide visioning effort. The new Chair of the MPO, as part of his first public message in the position, stated that Vision 2030 is the centerpiece of their activity over the next 18 to 24 months. Even though Maryland is a national leader in “smart growth,” the State’s main MPO had decided to undertake a publicly oriented, bottom up visioning process – but, interestingly, they were partly goaded into the process by the Federal Highway Administration’s threat to withhold transportation funds. However, once led to the water, they are now enthusiastically embracing the process.

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) is just now organizing its visioning effort (its official kickoff is May 15). As usual, a variety of factors led to the visioning effort. In this case, the MPO had come under severe public criticism for its lack of public involvement and its lack of putting its planning into a broader context. This criticism reached a crescendo during their 1998 RTP update process. Many of the public criticisms were echoed internally by staff, providing an internal constituency championing a visioning effort.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Federal Highway Administration threatened to withhold transportation funding if the MPO did not address these concerns. At one point, the Chair of the MPO was willing to be decertified, until other political leaders intervened, successfully advocating to stop fighting the process and instead embrace it.

2. Regional characteristics

BMC governs a region of five counties, two cities (Baltimore and Annapolis) with 2.5 million people. The region functions under a very strong county system, with an elected County executive and an elected County council serving as a de facto City Council for the County. They are growing at roughly 1% per year.

Maryland, of course, is widely known as a leader in “smart growth” efforts. Governor Parris Glendening is given credit for coining the term and is a national champion of the concept. The State of Maryland only invests in local projects that have a “smart growth” emphasis, the State has spearheaded a complete overhaul of building codes and zoning under “smart growth” principles, and they are currently developing a parcel level mapping database of the entire State.

Yet, even in a State with that much “smart growth” floating around, the MPO was pressured into better regional planning, using a bottom up process.

3. The players

The MPO has put together an outside Steering Committee of 35 high level people from academia, the environmental community, planning directors, the “minority communities”, non-profit heads, and others. Interestingly, there are no local elected officials on the Committee – the MPO felt that it needed to be a credible outside group in order to caution against being seen as an internally-driven

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effort. It seems that, given the often-skeptical reaction of local elected officials to regional visioning efforts, the local elected officials have accepted this arrangement ... for now.

The MPO has also set up an internal Management and Coordination Committee, which is a cross section of internal staff that will govern the staff level work needed to conduct the Vision.

This year, the new Chair of BMC stated that Vision 2030 is their major focus for the next 18-24 months and has publicly exhorted each elected official to endorse the process within their jurisdictions. The Chair of the effort is a former State Senator and longtime regional leader.

4. Funding sources and levels

The MPO has budgeted \$500,000 for 18 months of consultant work. They have also hired a former County Planning Manager and former Vice Chair of the region's transportation planning agency as the internal Project Manager. Other than that, they are utilizing internal staff on the project.

5. Data availability/gathering

The MPO is depending on internal capability to produce the needed data, although their process seems somewhat less data driven than many others do. However, this could be merely because they are just getting going and are not sure what kind of data they will need to produce. They seem more focused on the qualitative public participation/stakeholder feedback process than on quantitative data production.

6. Major phases/components

Of course, they are only starting, so they have a work *plan*, but not much has happened.

The first phase is to bring together small focus groups of key participants to set out a broad frame for the discussion. They will then broaden that out to hold a number of meetings with key stakeholder groups. These meetings will provide a sense of what issues should be on the table and how they should be addressed.

They will then form subcommittees to tackle particular issues – likely environment, equity, economic development, and governance. Those subcommittees will hold a variety of public meetings, the purpose of which will be to hammer the issues into loose alternative scenarios.

They will then conduct a broad telephone survey to test their assumptions with the broader population, find out the values they hold, and get a wider level of feedback. Following the survey comes what seems to be the centerpiece of the program – a Community Choices Process, wherein everyone from high level elected officials to community people choose among various scenarios to come up with a preferred strategy. That strategy will become the draft vision, which will then go out for another round of feedback before being drafted into a final document.

The implementation strategies for the vision will be laid out in ten year increments, with each set of strategies building on the previous. The goal of the vision is most immediately to undertake better transportation planning, but it has an explicit goal of developing strategies that will enhance “livability, productivity, and economic competitiveness.”

7. Results

Because they have just started, there are few concrete results, but a couple of developments are already important.

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Leadership Development

The early development of a powerful Steering Committee is an important step in any effort. In addition, the Chair of the MPO and State-level officials are point to Vision 2030 as a signature planning effort both for the Baltimore region and within the MPO. This kind of early support bodes well for continued momentum.

Process Development

The MPO has a clear road in front of them, with specific steps delineated, funding identified, and strategies fleshed out. Although flexibility is important, having a firm sense of the road ahead helps outside stakeholders, elected officials, and others more easily support the effort because they know what they are getting involved with.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

They feel that getting consensus on the most important regional projects to consider will be quite a challenge. In addition, their County governance system is very strong – they feel that getting cooperation amongst such strong jurisdictions will be a challenge. However, the MPO's governing body has signed off the process and most of the players have committed to carry it out.

Strengths

Inclusiveness – The Baltimore process is explicitly a bottom-up, collaborative process. If they succeed at their objectives, the vision will be built on a strong foundation of public support thereby increasing its chances of passage.

Public-private partnering – By inviting an outside Steering Committee in to run the visioning process that includes both public and private leaders, they are increasing the chances that the message of the vision will be carried into a variety of communities and stakeholder groups throughout the region.

Weaknesses

Process sequence – The consultants for the Baltimore effort have proposed having very small “key participant” meetings, then holding stakeholder roundtables, then developing scenarios through public meetings ... then doing a telephone survey of residents' values and opinions. They risk having the final Community Choices Process look like either a fait accompli. However, their strong commitment to public participation should help avoid this.

Steering committee composition – While including “outsiders” on the Steering Committee is always preferable, the lack of any local elected officials on the Committee runs the risk that they will not champion the vision within their communities.

Sustaining organization? – Right now at least, the BMC is saying that developing the vision will last 18-24 months, and then will be “finished.” This runs the risk that the vision will be developed ... and forgotten. Even with implementation mechanisms, without an institutionalized structure to continue moving the vision forward, they all too often become irrelevant. The MPO may fill that role, but that is currently unclear.

Flexibility? – While firm process development is important, the MPO seems fairly rigidly tied to it. While it's difficult to second guess a process that has not really gotten underway, the process needs to have flexibility built in to it ... and it's unclear whether this one does.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

Baltimore is interesting because they are undertaking a broad, bottom-up visioning process using very reputable national consultants and devoting considerable resources ... in an area where “smart growth” is already an accepted axiom. It would seem to be a prime candidate for the MPO simply taking the State’s policy provisions and morphing them into a regionally-focused “growth vision.” Yet, they are doing exactly the reverse, relying on the public to help develop the vision. And they are depending on the vision to serve as the basis for their next RTP.

The following are some early lessons from the effort:

Top down pressure isn’t inherently bad – Arguably the main reason this visioning effort got started was under pressure from the Federal Highway Administration. They could have fought back – and some elected officials initially did – but instead, they recognized the wisdom and political usefulness of undertaking a growth visioning effort and have begun an inclusive, comprehensive process. It should be interesting to watch.

Early leadership is important – The new Chair of the MPO, in his first public message in that post, said that Vision 2030 was their most important effort over the next 18-24 months. This sets an important tone. In addition, the MPO has hired a former County planning director and Vice Chair of the Regional Transportation Board to be Project Manager for the effort. This, too, sends an important signal about the seriousness with which they’re taking the effort.

Legislation is not enough – Even in a State where “smart growth” is part of the common vernacular and a variety of State efforts are underway, the need for a broad, regional vision still became apparent. Again, they could have easily taken some pre-existing efforts and hammered them into a vision. Instead, they recognized that any vision must be built on a strong foundation of public support to last.

Strong jurisdictions must buy in early – Baltimore has a very strong County governance system. If the MPO had attempted to undertake this without their early buy in to its legitimacy, the effort would have died on the vine. Identifying the important players and jurisdictions and getting them on board early is a requirement.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

Regional Livability Footprint – Bay Area Summary

What They're Doing

Using a "Draft Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area" as the basis, a coalition of five super-regional agencies and a group of outside stakeholders are planning for future growth patterns across the nine counties and 100 cities that comprise the Bay Area.

Who's Leading It

The Steering Committee consists of representatives from ABAG, MTC, Air Quality Board, Water Quality Board, Conservation and Development Commission, and the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development. The Bay Area Alliance is a stakeholder-based coalition of groups interested in growth issues, borne out of the President's Council on Sustainable Development.

Website Address of the Effort

[Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development](#)

The Process in a Nutshell (Planned)

1. *Draft Compact Development.* The Bay Area Alliance has spent nearly four years getting stakeholder buy-in on a set of principles and benchmarks. This spawned the Regional Livability Footprint effort.
2. *Reconnaissance Meetings.* An initial round of meetings to get feedback from stakeholders and "insiders" has been held to help frame the public workshops.
3. *Public Workshops.* One public workshop will be held in all but one Bay Area county to obtain a wide variety of ideas about growth scenarios and implementation strategies.
4. *Base Case.* While the workshops are being held, ABAG staff and a "technical team" will develop a "base case" scenario, which will be a version of its usual future trends analysis.
5. *Scenario development.* About three preferred alternatives will be developed using the information gleaned from both the workshops and the base case scenario.
6. *More public workshops.* A more extensive media-based public outreach campaign will then attempt to get a broader array of feedback on the preferred scenario as developed.
7. *Alternative scenarios.* ABAG is committed to developing one scenario, but the Bay Area Alliance will develop and analyze any alternative scenarios that garner decent support.
8. *Adoption.* If one alternative garners significant support, the ABAG Board will adopt it (instead of the baseline) as the basis for the next RTP update.

Results

1. The Draft Compact serves as a valuable document to underpin the effort.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

2. This process itself is a result of a negative reaction to previous plans to simply develop and analyze alternative scenarios among the stakeholder groups.

Lessons

1. *Local elected officials on board early.* Although the Alliance represents a broad group of stakeholders, local elected officials insisted on a public process. This feedback would have been valuable earlier.
2. *Consistent progress is important.* Although the Draft Compact is valuable, its development has been tortuous. Finding the line between resolving thorny issues and moving forward in the face of uncertainty is important.
3. *Are regional agencies credible?* This effort has gone from an external, stakeholder-driven effort to an internal, agency-driven effort. Will it maintain its credibility?
4. *Think about scale.* While the Bay Area's regional focus is commendable, they have struggled with how to deal with subregional issues. Weaving subregional concerns into a larger regional process may be advisable.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

REGIONAL LIVABILITY FOOTPRINT BAY AREA

Can a Coalition of “super agencies” spearhead growth visioning?

The Association of Bay Area Governments is currently spearheading a “Regional Livability Footprint” project to determine an alternative land use model for future growth in the region. It is undertaking this effort in partnership with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Conservation and Development Commission, the Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development, which is a broad-based, high-level outside stakeholder group. The regional agencies had been undertaking a parallel effort quite similar to the Bay Area Alliance’s Livability Footprint project for some time – the two efforts were only officially joined late last year. The effort has gone under a number of iterations, and has taken about three years just to get to a point where a visioning process could be agreed. Can this unusual alliance be successful within the potent political environment of Northern California?

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

This particular visioning effort has gone under a number of iterations. It really began with the formation of the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development in 1997, whose purpose is to “develop and implement an action plan that will lead to a more sustainable Bay Area.” The Alliance is an outgrowth of the President’s Council on Sustainable Development – two people who sat on the Council spearheaded the development of the Alliance to lead a sustainable development initiative.

The Alliance’s first Steering Committee included members representing what they state as the three Es of sustainability: equity, environment, and the economy. The Sierra Club, PG & E, the Bay Area Council, the Urban Habitat Program, and the President of ABAG were all on that first Committee and remain there today, although the individuals holding the various positions have changed.

The Alliance decided to engage Bay Area stakeholders in writing a Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area – a document with principles, action items and benchmarks for future sustainability (referred to as the “Draft Compact”). This document is meant to serve as the basis for a larger visioning program – but that process is just now beginning because it has proven very difficult to get agreement upon the Compact itself, which is still not finalized.

Out of that effort has emerged the Regional Livability Footprint project, which serves as the most direct corollary for our purposes. While that effort has been in the planning stages for a couple of years, it is really just now getting underway (more on that below).

In addition to discussing the genesis of this effort, a parallel track happening within the MPO needs to be mentioned as well. In 1998, ABAG joined with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (like our MTA) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to apply for federal TCSP funds in order to provide local governments incentives to change their land use patterns. They failed twice to get that funding. Therefore, this coalition of agencies decided to undertake an effort to determine how to provide local governments with the tools needed to change future development patterns on their own.

Given that ABAG was already working with the Bay Area Alliance on its Draft Compact project, they decided to merge the two efforts last fall into the Regional Livability Footprint project.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

2. Regional characteristics

The Association of Bay Area Governments plans for 100 cities and nine counties containing over six million people in a 7,000 square mile area. Various visioning efforts have taken place over the years in this very civically active region.

The key difference between Northern and Southern California in these types of efforts is that the Bay Area has a healthy – some would say too healthy – civic infrastructure, which often makes negotiating among stakeholders the most difficult phase of any broad effort. Southern California has a dearth of civic activity, which has the benefit of allowing efforts to move forward more quickly but the drawback of making those efforts more difficult to implement.

3. The players

Like so many things in the Bay Area, there are many players involved with this effort. The primary movers have been the Bay Area Council, which is a business-led organization that is becoming a leader in growth management in the region. The Bay Area Alliance is housed there and they are undertaking much of the staff-level work on the Draft Compact.

However, out of the Draft Compact has emerged the “Regional Livability Footprint Project”, which has become the primary “growth visioning” effort, and is being spearheaded by ABAG. The Livability Footprint attempts to translate the Draft Compact, which covers a broad range of issues, into explicit land use terms. The leaders of that effort are ABAG, the MTC, the Air Quality Management District, the Conservation and Development Commission (responsible for protecting the Bay), the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Bay Area Alliance – in short, a coalition of all the regional agencies, attempting to work together on smart growth. The people actually representing those agencies on the Steering Committee are mostly elected officials.

4. Funding sources and levels

The total budget for the Livability Footprint effort is approximately \$1.4 million, but that does not include preliminary work completed by the Bay Area Alliance. They have secured approximately \$850,000 of this. ABAG, the MTC, and the Air Quality Management Board have each contributed \$150- \$200,000 to this effort from their internal funds. The EPA has contributed \$180,000. The Bay Area Alliance has contributed some existing funds – they are funded by a variety of foundations, businesses, and federal sources. Both the Alliance and ABAG are currently applying for other funds as well – they are requesting \$500,000 from the State budget, \$1,000,000 from TCSP funds, and about \$750,000 from other foundation requests.

5. Data availability/gathering

A fairly large amount of data and maps have been produced, mostly by the Bay Area Alliance at this point. Extensive GIS mapping and trend analysis has been deployed, a fairly comprehensive attempt at determining future growth patterns has been undertaken. However, data development and sharing is one of the explicit goals of the Footprint as it moves forward.

As part of the Livability Footprint, a Technical Team has been formed to provide and interpret data. ABAG’s “base case scenario” will simply be its usual trends analysis. However, as the process moves forward, a fair amount of mapping and data development will occur around the alternative future scenarios. This should provide a fairly comprehensive picture.

SCAG Growth Visioning for Sustaining a Livable Region

6. Major phases/components

Draft Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area

The Bay Area Alliance began in 1997 by developing five caucuses and six working groups to develop the Compact. The caucuses were stakeholder-based, while the working groups were issue-based. They estimate that over 200 people were involved in developing the Draft Compact. The Compact was first presented to ABAG in April 1999, with widely varying reactions. After another round of revisions and input, the latest version of the Draft Compact was published in July 2000. It is still undergoing revisions and each Compact comes with a Feedback Form to garner further input.

The final Compact is scheduled to be published and submitted for approval to the regional agencies later this year. The centerpiece of the Draft Compact is Ten Commitments to Action in a variety of areas from civic engagement to schools to housing. In addition, for each action item, a list of benchmarks has been developed. The Compact's level of specificity and benchmarking make it a very useful document, but has also significantly impeded progress towards a final outcome.

Regional Livability Footprint

The idea to determine how the Bay Area would grow – and specifically how much land that growth would use and in what form – was always part of the overall work plan for implementing the Draft Compact. Essentially, the Footprint is simply a preferred land use pattern, including types of development and areas for preservation. However, its scope has narrowed over the evolution of the project, notably by scaling back plans to analyze a variety of scenarios to just a single alternative scenario. In addition, while the Bay Area Alliance originally spearheaded the Footprint, it has since been moved to ABAG and the other regional agencies have been brought in.

Originally, the plan was to simply model a few different alternative growth scenarios and determine a livability footprint. However, as the Compact and the Footprint project started to garner more attention, concerns about its lack of both local elected and public involvement caused it to be significantly retooled as a public engagement process towards growth visioning.

ABAG's Process

In 1998, the Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition urged ABAG to apply for federal Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Funds. This led to ABAG, MTC, and BAAQMD to jointly apply for the funds in order to provide incentives to local governments to develop alternative land use patterns. They were turned down twice, which led them to think more about how they could undertake such a process themselves. Since the Bay Area Alliance was already working with ABAG on its Footprint project and was at a turning point itself, it was decided to merge the two efforts. Both sides see that as beneficial in that ABAG has resources while the Bay Area Alliance has built a fair amount of credibility.

Footprint Development Timeline

A kickoff workshop was held in September 2000 to summarize the issues. Immediately following, a series of nine stakeholder workshops were held to get feedback from key participants on the proper scope and issues to be included in the visioning effort. Currently, that data is being analyzed and preparations are being made for a series of nine broad public workshops to be held in the fall of this year.

The public workshops will be held in all but one of the region's nine counties (one is doing its own process) and will bring together a wider array of stakeholders and members of the interested public to discuss various growth strategies and implementation mechanisms. Obtaining consensus will not be a goal at this point; getting the widest range of options is the goal.

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While those workshops are being held, ABAG staff will spend approximately eight months developing a baseline scenario to be judged against, including data from the regional agencies and in-house data.

In late 2001/early 2002, once the baseline scenario and public workshops are complete, approximately three preferred alternative land use scenarios will be developed and analyzed. Local working groups will be consulted for further feedback.

In early 2002, another round of public workshops will be held in each County, further refining the preferred scenario(s) and addressing specific subregional issues that will likely emerge from the first round of workshops. The goal at this point is to obtain consensus around one of the preferred alternatives.

In mid-2002, they will analyze the feedback and hold additional workshops as needed or requested. They will then develop and analyze the single preferred alternative growth pattern throughout the summer. Concurrently, the Bay Area Alliance will develop and analyze alternative scenarios that may arise out of the process, and will conduct further outreach around the alternative scenarios that ABAG does not use.

In summer and fall 2002, a widespread media-based public education campaign around the preferred scenario and any alternatives is planned to get much wider public feedback on what is developed to that point.

Finally, after another round of feedback and analysis, the ABAG Executive Board will be presented with one or more future growth alternatives in early 2003. Depending on the process to that point, the Board will either choose to adopt the baseline scenario (which is similar to the growth projections that are currently adopted as the basis for the RTP update), or they will choose to adopt an alternative future growth scenario, which would then become the basis for the next RTP update.

7. Results

Even though the latest iteration of this effort is just getting underway, a number of results have emerged from the efforts to date.

Draft Compact

The Draft Compact itself has proved to be a powerful discussion document. With its inclusion of action items and benchmarks, this document has been driving the growth discussion within the Bay Area over the last couple of years.

Livability Footprint

Although it is just getting underway, the fact that five powerful "super agencies" have signed on to the Footprint project is an interesting result. It remains to be seen how involved they remain as the project moves forward.

Improved Mapping and Data

As part of continuing to move this process forward, the Bay Area Alliance in partnership with the GreenInfo Network has produced a number of maps that make a compelling case for the need for better growth management in the Bay Area. In addition, the Draft Compact development process has resulted in a wide array of useful data. In fact, it is the production of this preliminary data that has convinced ABAG to undertake a substantial data development and analysis phase as part of the Footprint.

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8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Stakeholder negotiation – The high level of activism in the Bay Area has presented special challenges to this effort. By including such a broad and strong array of stakeholders from the beginning, it has been very difficult to get agreement on principles. They have overcome that through sheer persistence.

Inertia – The regional agencies have long paid lip service to the value of growth visioning, but they have shown little ability until recently to give an institutional commitment to it. Overcoming that inertia has partly resulted from persistence, and also from the Bay Area Alliance successfully demonstrating that it would go forward with or without the agencies' cooperation. Eventually, they saw the value of spearheading the process instead of allowing it to happen "to" them.

Differing agendas – The Bay Area is a fairly compact region with a similar set of problems, yet the political issues and most pertinent problems are different in, for instance, the San Francisco area, Silicon Valley, and the East Bay. Devising a process that honored those differences while striving for unity has been an especially large challenge. It will be difficult to know whether they have successfully navigated this minefield until the process is further along.

Strengths

Public/private partnership – One of the strengths of this process from the beginning has been the partnership between the public and private sectors. While private sector interest has ebbed and flowed, the presence of such prominent local companies as PG&E, the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Gap, and Bank of America has been helped provide some level of credibility to their effort. In addition, the current partnership between the regional agencies and the Bay Area Alliance is beneficial in that the agencies have much more extensive resources while the Alliance brings a fair amount of credibility to the process.

Persistence – This effort has gone through a number of iterations and, at various points along the way has looked nearly dead. However, the persistence of the Bay Area Alliance and the Bay Area Council has kept it alive throughout the uncertainty, again pointing out the importance of some sort of sustaining organization in efforts such as these.

Inclusiveness – Although it has provided its own challenges, the broad nature of this effort will ensure that whatever comes of it will have a broad base of support. It is not seen as being driven by any one organization – it is truly seen as a Coalition-led effort of regional agencies, nonprofits, the business community, environmentalists, and others.

Weaknesses

Lack of focus – Developing the Draft Compact has probably been a wise step, but at certain points, it became something being developed for its own sake instead of as the basis for a larger effort. It likely needed someone to push it forward in the face of uncertainty, although this, too, would have carried risks. But nearly four years in, and they are still getting agreement on these principles.

Lack of clear leadership – Nearly every successful visioning effort has one or two key leaders who champion it and bring others on board. The Livability Footprint has never really had that. Certain individuals have been an important part of the process, but no high profile person has really seized it as their own. The leadership of the Bay Area Alliance has played a key role, but they are a changing group of people. ABAG has been a reluctant partner. The other regional agencies signed on because it is a good idea, but they are not really leading the charge. This may spell trouble for the effort further down the line.

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Misread political landscape – The leaders in this project originally felt that getting a broad and credible group of stakeholders to sign on to regional growth alternatives, a livability footprint, etc. was the key to garnering the necessary political support for implementation. However, it became clear once the plan started to achieve a higher profile that local elected officials felt excluded, causing the entire process to be retooled into a publicly oriented information gathering process. If this would have been recognized sooner, time and money could have been saved.

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

The Bay Area has undertaken a very ambitious visioning process throughout a large and diverse region. The effort has had its share of fits and starts, but seems to be on fairly firm ground moving forward with a solid foundation of research and analysis. Some lessons for SCAG:

Don't go too fast ... or too slow – This effort is finally picking up steam after languishing for nearly three years. On the one hand, efforts like this cannot simply be steamrolled through – they must get legitimate and extensive feedback and support to remain credible – but nor can they be seen as nonexistent. In other words, the individual steps should be small, but constant.

Stakeholders aren't enough – Even in a region with a strong and vibrant civic infrastructure, simply including “the players” in the growth debate did not provide the needed credibility to move the project forward. A publicly oriented, bottom up process was necessary to get the proper political support.

Get real commitment – The leadership of ABAG and some private sector leaders such as PG&E have been involved with the effort from the beginning – but often in name only. A real commitment from people in leadership positions who are committed to championing the effort is necessary.

Determine the appropriate scale – The Bay Area is undertaking a region-wide vision, which partly makes sense because it is a relatively cohesive region. However, they are still wrestling with how to deal with “subregional” issues. It may be worthwhile to consider separate subregional visioning efforts being knitted together into a regional whole.

Strike the balance – Public/private partnerships, coalition and consensus building, agreeing on principles, and public engagement are hallmarks of successful visioning efforts. Yet, they can also bog them down. Knowing when to take the time to work out difficult issues and when to move forward in spite of them is crucial.

Get the internal structure together early – The Bay Area has struggled with internecine struggles between stakeholder groups, the Bay Area Alliance, ABAG and others. At this point, it seems as if the Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the regional agencies and the Alliance while housed at ABAG is working decently, but getting to that point was a challenge.

Can regional agencies work together? – A coalition of regional agencies is an intriguing idea. They bring formidable resources, staff, data, and outreach to the table. However, it remains to be seen how their ability to work together will play out.

The Bay Area's effort is ambitious and intriguing. Clearly, that region has faced many of the same challenges as ours with housing allocation, fiscal issues, and transportation. The visioning effort is not a direct response to a direct challenge, but rather something that has evolved into its current form. Watching its progress will be instructive.

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MetroVision 2020 – Denver Summary

What They Did

Mostly written by outside consultants and MPO staff, “MetroVision 2020” identifies six core elements for growth. Remarkably, this Vision has taken hold throughout the region.

Who Led It

MetroVision 2020’s original Steering Committee started with 45 people from the public and private sectors, which ended up at 20 people. Since its adoption, a MetroVision Policy Committee and a MetroVision Action Group have also been formed.

Website Address of the Effort

[Metro Vision 2020](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Deterministic modeling.* They began by producing a baseline analysis of current trends, and then used GIS modeling to come up with alternatives based on their own assumptions.
2. *Developed scenarios and benchmarks.* They then developed four different scenarios for future development as well as 25 evaluation criteria by which to judge the scenarios.
3. *Six core elements.* Picking and choosing among the four scenarios, six core elements of the vision were adopted: extent of urban development, open space, free-standing communities, balanced, multi-modal transportation systems, urban centers and environmental quality.
4. *Adoption and implementation.* The draft vision was approved in 1997, with the better part of the next two years spent trying to determine how to implement it.
5. *New leadership and sharper teeth.* In 1999, the MPO got a new, highly credible Executive Director who championed MetroVision. In addition, the City of Denver suggested making 20% of the selection criteria for Transportation Improvement Program funds tied to adopting certain elements of MetroVision. Both of these were watershed occurrences.

Results

1. The Mile High Compact, a binding agreement committing cities to implement MetroVision, has been signed by Mayors representing nearly 80% of the region’s population.
2. Various pieces of State legislation have been introduced to operationalize MetroVision.
3. MetroVision now serves as the basis for all their planning efforts, including the RTP. They have also set up additional Committees to deal with more specific elements of the vision.

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Lessons

1. *Leadership can trump everything.* The right leader or leaders championing the right effort in the right way can move mountains.
2. *Substance matters.* Although politics plays a large role in any visioning effort, the fact that MetroVision included enough detail to be meaningful and allowed a fair amount of flexibility made it attractive to many people.
3. *Persistence pays.* The MPO's staff and Steering Committee stuck with this process, even as it began to languish. Every effort has its rhythm – sticking to it is the key.
4. *Understand the underlying principles.* The MPO underwent a gradual but dramatic change in its internal culture – it went from planning for a **projected** future to planning for a **desired** future. This realization has helped people understand why they are undertaking the effort.

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METROVISION 2020 DENVER

How does an internally-developed visioning document derived through a fairly closed process become a vital, pertinent vision for the region?

One word: leadership.

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) decided to plan differently for future growth in the early '90s after the passage of ISTEA and 1990 Census data was released. They essentially came up with a Vision through a fairly closed process – some consultants, a few internal staff, and a Steering Committee. After a fallow period in the mid '90s when they were attempting to determine implementation, the combination of a dynamic new Executive Director and the City of Denver taking a leadership role in giving the Vision some teeth led to a rejuvenated effort that now serves as the centerpiece of the MPO. According to MPO staff, perhaps the biggest internal change is that, instead of planning for a projected future, they plan for a desired future. Perhaps most interestingly, Mayors representing nearly 80% of the regional population have now signed the Mile High Compact, a binding, intergovernmental agreement obligating individual cities to implement certain elements of the Vision. How did a Vision that was developed in all the wrong ways get to play such a vital role in future growth planning for the region? One word: leadership.

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) began attempts at developing a visioning effort in 1990. But the effort really got off the ground in 1993 with the passage of ISTEA (with its requirement for long range planning) and with the release of detailed 1990 Census numbers showing the region's dramatic growth. Fears about future air quality and the implications of air quality for federal funding also helped drive the effort. The final MetroVision 2020 was adopted in 1997 and updated in 2000 – the document serves as the central driving force within the agency.

2. Regional characteristics

DRCOG governs an eight county, 49-city region with a current population of about two million people, which comprises over half the state of Colorado. The region covers 5,076 square miles (including extensive national forest lands) and is expected to grow to 3.2 million by 2020.

As in many regions, this region has a fair amount of tension between Denver as the dominant “big city” and the outlying areas. The State as a whole is fairly conservative with liberal pockets in places like Boulder, which is the second largest city in the region. Growth – or, more accurately, the loss of open space and traffic – is a fairly major issue, with various pieces of legislation being introduced at the State level and the Governor releasing his own smart growth agenda.

3. The players

Interestingly, the “players” did not really fall into place until after the Vision was written. The MPO did set up a Steering Committee for the visioning process, which consisted of local elected officials, local planning directors, environmental leaders, community activists, and some others. They originally started with a Committee of 45, which eventually whittled itself down to 20.

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After the Vision was adopted, the MPO hired a very dynamic new Executive Director who had widespread political credibility and decided to champion the Vision. In the meantime, consultants had been hired to facilitate discussions among local elected officials and others about the feasibility of MetroVision. Out of that process and with the new ED's leadership, a group called the Metro Mayors Caucus was approached to help develop an agreement that would institutionalize the Vision. Most of the Mayors involved with the Caucus eventually signed on to the Mile High Compact, which is a binding, intergovernmental agreement to implement MetroVision in each individual City (more on that below).

4. Funding sources and levels

Remarkably, the MPO spent roughly \$200,000 over the course of 3-4 years to develop MetroVision 2020, mostly on consultants. Since its adoption, it has been woven into the culture of the organization, making estimates at post-implementation funding literally impossible.

5. Data availability/gathering

The MetroVision process mostly used existing data within the MPO – the only additional data they used was local General Plan information and emerging census data. They did not create or gather much additional data, though they did do quite a bit of new modeling using existing data. The “baseline data” was a simple projection of current trends.

6. Major phases/components

Developing the MetroVision 2020 document

The process of developing MetroVision 2020 was almost exclusively internal within the MPO. Once the steering committee was set and the consultant hired, they simply went to work. After determining baseline projections, they spent the better part of two years coming up with four alternative future growth scenarios – loosely, those consisted of corridor development, satellites, urban centers, and “spurs.”

Once these were developed, the MPO determined 25 criteria by which to evaluate the scenarios. These included things like vehicle miles traveled, density, transit viability, and land consumed. The Steering Committee didn't clearly pick one of the four scenarios; instead, they took a “cafeteria method” of picking and choosing from each one. Eventually, six core elements (or principles) emerged which came to serve as the centerpiece of MetroVision 2020: extent of urban development, open space, free-standing communities, balanced, multi-modal transportation system, urban centers and environmental quality. MetroVision 2020 was largely completed in 1997 and updated last year with fleshed out implementation strategies.

Implementing MetroVision 2020

MetroVision 2020 was used as the basis for DRCOG's 1998 RTP update – in a sense, the 1998 RTP became the fiscally constrained version of MetroVision 2020. However, once that process was complete, much of 1998 was spent determining how to implement this broad vision. A MetroVision policy committee consisting solely of local elected officials was formed, but was more concerned with protecting their interests than in implementing a regional, long-term plan.

Giving MetroVision Teeth

In 1999, DRCOG hired a new Executive Director who had been the State's Department of Transportation Director and who believed strongly in MetroVision. Once he came on board and started championing it, implementation of MetroVision became a more important issue. Finally, the City of Denver proposed giving MetroVision some teeth – they proposed making 20% of the decision

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criteria for Transportation Improvement Plan money contingent on cities developing voluntary urban growth boundaries. Because the UGB's were voluntary, it became difficult for cities to be "in favor of" sprawl and against developing a UGB. So under the City of Denver's leadership, the Regional Council voted to approve their proposal.

Around this time, the new Executive Director, in partnership with prominent local consultants who had been facilitating discussions about MetroVision 2020, decided that an intergovernmental agreement would bring about cooperation more quickly and efficiently. They approached a group called the Metro Mayors Caucus, which is a voluntary group of elected officials formed to help advance regional issues. They drafted the Mile High Compact, which is the first voluntarily-led, binding intergovernmental agreement signed between cities in the nation. The Compact obligates the cities to determine urban growth boundaries, add certain elements to their General Plans, link their General Plans to growth management tools such as zoning and development regulations, and link their General Plans to the six core elements of the MetroVision document. Mayors representing nearly 80% of the regional population have signed the Compact.

Integrating MetroVision into the MPO

MetroVision 2020 is now an integral part of the MPO's organization and culture. The Executive Director has formed the MetroVision Action Group, which is a sort of think tank to help provide policy options for implementing MetroVision. The MPO also created the MetroVision Resource Center, which is a community outreach component, showing the public how MetroVision's components affect their communities. In addition, the Partnership for Regional Livability, a national group focused on regionalism, has chosen Denver as one of its four pilot projects to help implement already-developed visions.

7. Results

Most of the results have been detailed above. They include:

Mile High Compact

The Mile High Compact, a binding, intergovernmental agreement that commits cities to growth-management and regionally oriented local planning has been signed by Mayors representing nearly 80% of the regional population. It is the first City/County led, voluntarily developed agreement of its sort in the nation.

Transportation funding tied to vision implementation

An institutional integration of transportation with land use has been implemented, using the Transportation Improvement Program process. 20% of the evaluation criteria for funding awards are based on implementing certain elements of MetroVision, most notably determining voluntary urban growth boundaries. This step perhaps more than any other brought region-wide attention to MetroVision.

Legislation

Numerous pieces of legislation have been introduced attempting to further institutionalize MetroVision. Most of those are currently working their way through the process. They include making MetroVision's components mandatory, rewarding cities for developing urban growth boundaries, and increasing the MPO's ability to coordinate regional planning. Needless to say, many of these are controversial, but the debate seems to be about "what kind" instead of "whether or not."

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Internal MPO Reorganization

A have sprung up around MetroVision, determining how the document can be implemented and how it can integrate with other of the MPO's efforts. They have a number of MetroVision-oriented committees, including an implementation committee and a policy committee, which serves as a sort of think tank determining creative implementation mechanisms for MetroVision. Finally, the new Executive Director of DRCOG undertook a fairly major reorganization of the MPO explicitly to better reflect the elements of MetroVision 2020 and be more equipped to undertake implementation. This was an important substantive step, but perhaps an even more important symbolic step.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Weak MPO Profile – DRCOG started from a very weak base of support amongst the region's cities. Like many MPOs, the local elected officials were somewhat leery of intrusion into their jurisdiction, and were partly involved to protect their interests. They are slowly learning the benefits of regional planning through a combination of good substantive work, reenergized leadership, and partnering with private sector interests.

Implementability – Once the Vision was written, some were concerned about the lack of ability to implement its provisions – while others did not want it to be implemented at all! They partly overcame this through persistence, and partly overcame it by successfully walking the line between incentivizing and mandating better planning and growth management.

Political Climate – Growth has been a particularly difficult political issue in Colorado – perhaps nowhere else better exemplifies the “stop sprawl, but don't densify” conundrum that exists amongst the general population. The effort always had the challenge of determining where and how the region would grow while preserving open space and educating people about the tradeoffs involved in managing growth.

Strengths

Firm but flexible implementation – This visioning effort -- especially the post-visioning implementation -- is notable for striking the balance between seeing that the vision gets implemented while firmly leaving local control with local governments. Even when local governments were incentivized to draw urban growth boundaries through the TIP process, the UGBs were always voluntary – they weren't being asked to draw legal boundaries; they were simply asked to determine a desired future growth pattern. This philosophy, more than anything, has kept the Vision not only alive, but a vital document within the region.

Focused breadth – The Denver vision exemplifies successfully integrating the variety of issues involved with growth management while maintaining the focus necessary to keep the vision's goals clearly in sight. Through an iterative process, they determined which issues needed to be included and jettisoned those that served as distractions.

Persistence – The MPO realized that its work was not finished once the vision was written. As mentioned above, the visioning effort was revitalized when new leadership came on board in 1999 – but the vision had been largely completed in 1997. Even though the MPO hadn't had much success determining feasibility and implementation strategies during the interim, their continued dedication ensured that the vision was still part of the mix for the new leadership to consider.

Public/private partnership – The MetroVision Steering Committee was a broad group of stakeholders and others, mostly from outside the MPO. A few local elected officials were represented, but the Steering Committee very explicitly consisted of business leaders,

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environmentalists, planning directors, and others, bringing valuable outside input into developing the vision.

Weaknesses

Lack of public input – The MetroVision development process was very internally driven. With the exception of the Steering Committee, which only provided broad direction, the process was almost exclusively driven by consultants with staff input. A couple of public meetings were held, with predictably low attendance.

Lack of implementation planning – The MPO originally undertook this effort with little thought as to how this “vision” would be implemented. They simply modeled some alternative scenarios, chose from among them, and published the final product. They did decide on an implementation philosophy of “voluntary, flexible, collaborative, and effective” – and that philosophy has served them well politically – but they didn’t plan specific implementation features. The plan has since been updated to include implementation strategies, but that is largely the result of more recent efforts, once the Vision was already developed.

Lack of initial political buy-in – The MPO undertook this process with little buy in from local elected officials and did not really bolster that buy in during the early stages of the process. Again, it was only once the new leadership of the MPO came in and the Metro Mayors Caucus got involved that local and State-level elected officials not only began to buy in, but champion the effort. But it started on shaky political legs.

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

DRCOG undertook a closed, fairly exclusive (with the notable exception of the first Steering Committee), “expert & consultant driven” process to develop MetroVision 2020 – in short, the same kind of process that virtually spells doom – or at least utter irrelevance – for any effort.

Yet, elected officials representing nearly 80% of the region’s residents have signed a binding agreement to abide by it, the MPO has integrated it into nearly all of its processes, and they have found ways to implement its main features while allowing local jurisdictions to retain control. So what happened? A few key things:

Leadership can trump everything – The Vision was developed using a fairly closed process, with little initial political support. Yet, it is now a vital and evolving document in regional planning in the area. That can be chalked up to nothing more than leadership. The MPO’s new leadership championed the effort, both internally and externally. In addition, individual elected officials throughout the region have championed MetroVision. The importance of individual leadership cannot be underestimated.

Substance matters – While the leadership cannot be underestimated, it’s unlikely that those leaders would have signed on – and, importantly, that others would have followed their lead – if the vision itself was not well constructed. The combination of MetroVision’s specificity and flexibility made it attractive to policy makers.

Persistence – The MPO’s staff was persistent in sticking with the visioning process – and were empowered to do so internally. This was important in getting it through the “lean years” after the Vision was completed, but before meaningful implementation had kicked in.

Walking the line – The Vision itself is specific enough to be meaningful, while leaving the real controversial questions to be determined later. This allowed people to understand the vision’s intent and recognize its direction without feeling boxed in.

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Get the big players on board – The City of Denver was a key leader in the effort. Denver's willingness to work for implementation of the vision, its leadership with the smaller cities, and the symbolic nature of the region's largest city embracing the vision also cannot be underestimated.

Philosophical changes matter – The MPO went under a gradual, but dramatic change in its planning philosophy – through undertaking the MetroVision process, they went from planning for a projected future to planning for a desired future. They, of course, continued to fulfill their legal forecasting requirements, but instead of stopping there, they broadened out that requirement to include forecasting a different and better future.

These elements are not necessarily “make or break” elements – but they did turn a fairly low-profile, internally driven effort into a fairly high-profile effort that has garnered the institutional buy in of a wide variety of elected officials, cities, stakeholders, and others.

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Envision Utah Summary

What They Did

Envision Utah, a public/private partnership nonprofit, undertook a comprehensive, bottom up visioning exercise, resulting in a Preferred Growth Strategy and an Implementation Toolkit for elected officials to operationalize the strategy.

Who Led It

Envision Utah's Steering Committee consists of over 140 regional leaders. Both public and private sector leaders have played a key role in championing the effort.

Website Address of the Effort

[Envision Utah](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Undertook a baseline analysis.* This included air quality, transportation, land use, water quality, and local general plan data – often having to create it from scratch. They used a working group of State agencies spearheaded out of the Governor's office to do this work.
2. *Commissioned a values survey of area residents.* This allowed them to speak in a language that ordinary people could relate to. They consider this one of their most important steps.
3. *Did mapping workshops.* Stakeholders sitting around tables had to place chips on a map to determine future growth. They quickly figured out that to accommodate growth without eating up the whole state, they had to "stack the chips." This was a critical turning point.
4. *Developed four alternative growth scenarios, using the mapping exercise and other feedback.* They also determined how a number of benchmarks would be affected under each scenario.
5. *Undertook a massive public outreach campaign* to get feedback (votes) on which scenario was most desirable. They got nearly 20,000 responses.
6. *Developed the Preferred Growth Strategy.* As part of that, they also undertook extensive market analysis to ensure that the strategy was as realistic as possible.
7. *Developed an Implementation Toolkit* to help local elected officials and others implement the vision.

Results

1. The baseline analysis, values survey, preferred strategy, and implementation toolkit.
2. The Legislature has now established a Utah Quality Growth Commission and the Governor's Quality Growth award.
3. A number of cities have undertaken their own planning efforts for the first time –more quantifiable results from individual cities will be available shortly.

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4. Cities have voluntarily collaborated to determine joint priorities for the first time.

Lessons

1. *Involve the private sector.* Their involvement lends crucial credibility.
2. *Leadership is critical.* It takes individual leaders championing the effort in public ways to make efforts like these successful.
3. *Be realistic.* These efforts take time, money, and effort – and a fair amount of it.
4. *Involve the public.* A bottom up process is crucial for providing the foundation that elected officials need to actually implement these changes.
5. *Get the right data.* “Cobbling something together” rarely works – recognizing what data is needed and then being diligent about collecting that data is important.

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ENVISION UTAH

What do you do when “regional planning” equals Communism and “growth management” equals political suicide?

Envision Utah is a public-private partnership that has spearheaded an effort that may be an example of “putting all the pieces together.” Their data creation and development has led to a sea change in the quality and quantity of data that cities have available for a wide variety of needs. The top down support has been strong, but always for a bottom up process. Everyone from elected officials to developers to environmentalists to community leaders buy in to and have a stake in the process. They undertook an extensive Values Survey, which has allowed them to speak to their regional residents in an entirely new way. The regional dialogue has changed significantly, and they have pointed the way toward implementation in a way that elected officials understand. And they did all of this in an environment where people advocating “regional planning” were called Communists just five years ago. Yes, Utah is different from Southern California ... but the lessons offered by Utah’s experience are many.

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

Envision Utah grew out of a public/private organization called the Coalition for Utah’s Future, which had been in existence since 1987. The original purpose of the Coalition was to stimulate economic growth, but by the mid-’90s, the effects of unrestrained growth were becoming apparent. The Coalition was also very affected by “Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to Fit the New California” published by the Greenlining Institute and the Bank of America in 1995.

After an extensive period of information gathering, Coalition building, and foundation laying, the Envision Utah effort officially got underway in 1997.

2. Regional characteristics

Envision Utah decided to consider their region the “commutershed” for Salt Lake City – an 89 city, 10 county region with 1.6 million people that consists roughly of 320 square miles of urbanized land. This region comprises about 80% of the State’s population and they claim it is the nation’s sixth most urbanized area. Two Metropolitan Planning Organizations govern the region. It is projected to grow to 2.7 million by 2020 – a 60% increase.

Local control is paramount – this sentiment is universal but even stronger in Utah. The mention of “regional planning” leads to terms like “Communism” in some communities. The Governor participated in the Envision Utah process, but legislative leadership was neither wanted nor expected from the State. Growth was a very touchy subject – nearly a “third rail” – because previous elected officials, most notably the current Governor’s father, felt that embracing “growth management” initiatives had ruined their careers.

3. The players

Envision Utah is a non-governmental organization that works very closely with influential, committed private sector leaders as well as public sector organizations. But public sector involvement was slow in coming and the MPO has mostly been involved in a technical capacity. The Envision Utah Steering Committee has grown to more than 100 people from all sectors of the community – business, environmental, elected officials, religious leaders, labor, Agency heads, etc. Peter

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Calthorpe was the consultant and, as described below, various State agencies were involved in the data gathering and preparation aspect of the project.

4. Funding sources and levels

Envision Utah has raised roughly \$7 million in both donations and in-kind contributions since 1996. They estimate roughly \$2.3 million has come from in-kind contributions from the State, mostly in the form of data provision, staff time, and the like. Roughly \$1.1 million has come from the Federal government, mostly in the form of Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP) grants. Only about \$130,000 has come from local governments. The balance, nearly \$3.5 million, has come from the private sector – mostly private foundations, with some business support and some in-kind support from media companies.

5. Data availability/gathering

The data generation aspect of Envision Utah is, in some ways, the most impressive. One of their first decisions was that they needed to know how the region would grow under current trends – they needed a baseline analysis. In partnership with the State, they formed the “Quality Growth Efficiency Tools” Committee (QGET), which is independently dedicated to “providing comprehensive, reliable, accessible, and consistent growth-related information.” The QGET Committee consists of staff from State and local government agencies (such as transportation, resources, and air quality), the MPO, and Envision Utah.

QGET’s baseline analysis projected trends in demographics, economics, transportation, air quality, water, and land use under current plans for 25 years. They did this by integrating long range transportation plans, State Office of Planning and Budget projections, State natural resources plans, water availability projections, air quality agency plans and, importantly, local general plans. In many cases, smaller cities either did not have a general plan or had not updated it in many years. In some cases, cities did not even collect needed data. In these cases, QGET helped either collect the data or, where it was disaggregated, it standardized the data. They also integrated all the plans so that, for instance, impacts on air quality from long-range transportation plans or impacts on resource availability from future land use could be determined. And then this entire baseline was put through a cost model so that all levels of government knew future fiscal impacts of current growth patterns. This was groundbreaking work.

QGET continues to provide all the mapping, analysis, data provision, and in some cases, data creation for Envision Utah. However, the data they have created, gathered, and standardized is now being used all over the State for a variety of purposes. Considering data creation and standardization as an activity with independent merit, but related to growth visioning has been very useful for Utah.

6. Major phases/components

Baseline Analysis

First, Envision Utah conducted a baseline analysis of where the State was headed under current plans and practices. This provided valuable context and a stark picture of the region’s future that galvanized action from elected officials and others. (See #5 for more information)

Values Survey

While doing the technical work of a baseline analysis, they also conducted a “values survey” of the region’s residents. This survey was different than most in that it did not merely rank residents’ views on the region’s challenges – it asked them about the underlying values that they felt were threatened by these challenges. So, for instance, if someone said they were concerned about traffic, the

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surveyors would dig deeper to discover that they were actually concerned about their commute time and they would then go even another level deeper to determine that they were concerned about commute time because it took them away from their families. This information was an invaluable tool for framing the challenge in ways that area residents could understand -- instead of talking about "reducing vehicle miles traveled", they could talk about "the ability to spend more time with your family" ... a much more powerful message.

Visualization Exercises – the "A-Ha Moment"

Once the baseline analysis galvanized interest in determining an alternative course of action, Envision Utah hosted two mapping exercises. In the first, tables of diverse stakeholders (including elected officials, environmentalists, business leaders, developers, community leaders, etc.) determined where future growth should – and should not – go. In the second, those same stakeholders sat around maps containing chips representing how the region was currently developed (housing, retail, open space, transportation corridors, etc.). Envision Utah then prepared chips representing future population growth. Those chips were sized to the map at current densities – for instance, a chip representing 10,000 people would take up as much room on the map as 10,000 people would take up land under then-current growth trends. This was important because each table was then asked to place the chips somewhere on the map – and if they placed the chips side by side, they could visually see for themselves how much land future growth would consume under current trends. They then started stacking the chips on the urban fringe – an important first step to realizing that new growth patterns had to change. But they still had chips left. What then? Stacking the chips on top of the current chips. This was quite a revelation for many people who thought Utah would never run out of land. It's that "A-ha moment" that set the stage for making the case that the region needed to grow differently.

Scenario Development

Using the mapping exercises and adding a layer of technical analysis, four alternative growth scenarios were then devised. The baseline served as "Scenario B." Scenario A was actually a growth trend of lower densities and more sprawl, which many developers said was reflective of the very recent past. Scenarios C and D called for more compact development, better transit, more open space preservation and the like. Air quality, transportation, infrastructure, land use, water, and, importantly, cost impacts were calculated for each scenario.

Public Education Campaign

Once the scenarios were developed, Envision Utah undertook a massive public education campaign, with public service announcements on television, newspaper ads, dozens of public meetings, brochures and mailers to explain the alternatives and get public feedback on them. The scenarios were also published as a newspaper insert with the ability to mail in responses, they were mailed to over half a million people, and they were published on the web. Because of such persistence, Envision Utah was able to get nearly 18,000 votes for a "preferred scenario."

Preferred Growth Strategy

The region's residents overwhelmingly chose "Scenario C" – a somewhat denser, more transit-oriented growth pattern, but not dramatically so. Once the general parameters of future growth were agreed to, a market and housing analysis was conducted in order to ensure that the preferred scenario reflected a potential future reality. Once another level of technical analysis was applied, Envision Utah published its "Preferred Growth Strategy" in 1999.

Implementation Toolkit

Although the preferred growth strategy was met with widespread praise for its comprehensiveness and foundation of public support, it soon became clear that elected officials were not sure how to

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implement it. Therefore, Envision Utah then wrote an “Implementation Toolkit”, which is a step by step guide to implementing the recommendations of the preferred growth strategy. Published in fall 2000, Envision Utah is now doing more outreach and education around the toolkit.

7. Results

As discussed, the Preferred Growth Strategy and the Implementation Toolkit have been two very powerful products as a result of this process. Envision Utah is right now in the process of finding out what individual cities have implemented as a result of their efforts – the preliminary results of that survey are quite encouraging. Cities that haven’t updated their General Plans in years are planning conservation-oriented subdivisions and open space preservation. Cities that had always fought with each other are now writing coordinated plans.

In addition, polls show that general awareness of growth issues and challenges and the understanding of what is necessary to meet those challenges has gone from the mid single digits to nearly 50% since they began their work.

Individual jurisdictions are cooperating on their own accord, doing things like writing self-prioritized transit plans and sponsoring symposia for local elected officials in various subregions. In fact, local elected officials say that the best result from the Envision Utah process has been increased interjurisdictional cooperation -- even though that was not even a stated goal of the process!

The State Legislature has now created a Utah Quality Growth Commission as a direct result of Envision Utah’s work, which funds “on the ground” efforts at better planning, open space preservation, compact development and the like. In addition, the Governor’s Quality Growth Award has also been established to focus attention on specific projects that embody the principles they have developed.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the ethos around growth has changed. To quote the former President of the Utah Home Builders Association: “I can tell you that, as a developer who goes to City Council meetings, that the nature of the dialogue has changed.”

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Political Climate -- This very conservative State was very skeptical of “regional planning” – in fact, Envision Utah staffers were often called “commies” at the beginning of their effort. In addition, the current Governor’s father felt like he had lost a previous election due to his embrace of a controversial growth initiative, making his involvement shaky from the start. Finally, the fear of State mandates was so strong that many local jurisdictions were skeptical if not downright hostile at first. They overcame these by simple persistence, being very strict about their message of “voluntary cooperation,” doing extensive public outreach to build a populist base of support, and they patiently laid the foundation, brick by brick, for people to understand the issues.

Active opposition – Many visioning efforts function in a vacuum, which is undesirable if vitality and relevance are to be acquired, but can also help avoid potentially fatal controversy. Envision Utah attracted attention – and detractors – from the beginning. In fact, many local elected officials got involved solely for the purpose of killing the effort. They have never completely overcome this (no high profile visioning effort will), but they did bring about a huge majority of their detractors through, again, persistence and strict adherence to the message. In fact, some of their biggest original detractors are now among the efforts biggest champions.

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Strengths

Values Survey – Understanding how to speak to their residents was crucial, especially in a region of such skepticism towards planning and growth management. They feel they would have failed before they even started if they would not have taken this critical step.

Baseline Analysis – Understanding their region's future was necessary, both substantively and strategically. Most visioning efforts do some sort of baseline analysis, but the comprehensive nature of Envision Utah's stands out, as does the patience with which they undertook it.

Public Outreach – The cornerstone of their effort. Once Envision Utah effectively reached out to the public – and effectively created the perception that they were doing so – they were able to give elected officials a credible reason to stand behind their plan. It's important to note that the "Preferred Growth Strategy" was very, very similar to any number of other "growth plans" that many jurisdictions have written. The difference? Envision Utah has presented theirs using a political argument ("this is what the people say they want") instead of an expert-based policy argument ("this is what needs to be done because the experts/elites say so").

Public/private partnership – Involving the private sector was crucial to give their effort credibility. In addition, the private sector has always played a high profile role in championing Envision Utah's message. In a region of fairly high distrust of government, this is difficult to overestimate.

Leadership – Envision Utah has always had committed, influential private sector leadership that has not only given it credibility, but helped broaden its reach beyond governmental bodies. It was the continued commitment from key leaders at critical times that has been crucial to ensuring Envision Utah's continued momentum during times of uncertainty.

Sustaining organization – It's important to note that "Envision Utah" is the name of an organization, not a process. The presence of an organization, or an infrastructure, to see that the plan is carried forward and implemented has been critical. For instance, when it became clear that the Preferred Growth Strategy was not specific enough, an organization existed to address the situation and has done so effectively.

Weaknesses

No teeth – Envision Utah has never had the power to ensure implementation of their ideas. They would argue that this would have doomed their efforts, but depending on the power of politics and persuasion has certainly made the process more difficult.

Political capital – Much of Envision Utah's credibility has come from avoiding certain controversial projects and from bringing together a broad group of stakeholders. However this strength has also been a constraint to their ability to aggressively advocate for particular causes. They have not yet figured out how to spend their political capital effectively.

Vision translation – Envision Utah wrote a compelling strategy for future growth, founded on strong public support and involvement ... only to see that strategy met with a collective shrug from elected officials. Their ability to turn that strategy into implementable action items has been key to their continued success.

9. Conclusion and Lessons for SCAG

Envision Utah has many similarities with other growth visioning efforts, but stands apart in many important ways. Starting from virtually scratch in terms of political momentum or awareness of growth

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issues, they have not only created the debate, but shaped it in important ways. Some important lessons for SCAG:

Don't underestimate the process – Do not underestimate the persistence, resources, and quality of effort it takes to undertake a credible visioning effort. Envision Utah, by their own admission, did not know what they were getting into when they started this, resulting in a number of fits and starts along the way.

Be comprehensive – At many points along the way, Envision Utah had to make key decisions as to whether they would take the easier, lesser, cheaper road or the harder, longer, more thorough road. They almost always chose the latter with a prudent eye towards reasonable expectations and have reaped the rewards in credibility, progress, and respect.

Be realistic – Envision Utah took a cold reading of their political, fiscal, and cultural environment and always made decisions taking those into account. Other efforts try to fit the square peg of their ideals into the round hole of their surroundings, with counterproductive results.

Involve the private sector – The importance of this also cannot be underestimated. Involving key private sector leaders was key to Envision Utah's success – they provided credibility, consistency, and an important "reality check" at key stages in the process.

Be bottom up – Without credible public involvement – not just in commenting on the outcome, but in helping to develop it – elected officials would never have been able to embrace the vision.

Envision Utah was a bottom up effort at growth visioning in a region where a top-down solution had no chance of survival. Through thorough data development, careful framing of the issue, persistence, and innovation, they were able to navigate a particularly tricky political minefield and produce a vision for future growth that has a better chance of long-term survival than most. Although the Utah region is different from Southern California in several important ways, there are also important similarities – and the principles that led to success in Utah are nearly universal.

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Growth Management Study Commission – Florida Summary

What They Just Finished Doing

In February 2001, a Growth Management Study Commission formed by Governor Jeb Bush completed a review of the state's growth management system and issued recommendations.

Who Led It

Governor Jeb Bush created the Commission, but he inherited a state that has been discussing sustainable development for nearly 15 years. The most significant contribution to planning in the state was the Florida Sustainable Communities project, which was initiated under the previous Governor and Legislature in 1996.

Website Address of the Effort

[Florida Growth Management Study Commission](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Florida Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project* – A project that identified “sustainable communities” models throughout the state and provided State assistance and partnership to particular communities. This put the substance of “smart growth” and growth management on the State's radar.
2. *Statewide Regional Forums on the Future of Growth Management* – Organized by the Secretary of Community Affairs, 22 Regional Forums were held throughout Florida to discuss the future of the growth management system. The Secretary also conducted a “stakeholders” survey of growth related concerns and issues.
3. *Growth Management Study Commission* – Created by Governor Bush, the Commission was charged with reviewing the growth management system in the state. It produced a final report that identified eight recommendations for the 2001 State Legislature, none of which have been passed, although two have been introduced.

Results

1. The Growth Management Study Commission finished its work in February 2001. The State Legislature has not moved on any of the recommendations and there are no real champions of the Commission's work pushing any follow up. The Department of Community Affairs is holding a Growth Management Workshop for planning officials in May, but other than that, nothing tangible has transpired. Governor Jeb Bush has kicked off his “Front Porch Florida” urban revitalization effort, but without Legislative support.

Lessons

1. *Analysis is important* – Any effort that fails to include strong, non-partisan data analysis is open for criticism. The Department of Community Affairs is going back to develop modeling tools that will give them the cost/benefit scenarios for development.

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2. *Needs a variety of elected officials* – While the Governor and his administration seem committed to growth management practices, they still need the support of the Legislature to get anything done. Include more of the local and regional elected officials in the process.
3. *Even the best laid plans ...* can get knocked down if they depend too much on one entity. Laying out a series of recommendations and then depending on the Legislature – or any one governmental body – to implement all the components is quite risky. A variety of implementing mechanisms need to be identified.

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT STUDY COMMISSION FLORIDA

How do you translate solid work into tangible results? It's tough.

Last year, Governor Jeb Bush created the Growth Management Study Commission. The Commission produced a Final Report in February 2001, which singled out citizen participation as a critical component in regional planning and identified a variety of ways to increase it. Moreover, the Secretary of Community Affairs, informally referred to as the State's chief planner, has been a real leader on growth management. He has conducted Regional Forums to discuss the future of growth management in Florida and has conducted a 'stakeholder' survey to assess where public sentiment is heading. In spite of this top level leadership, the Florida State Legislature rejected two of the Governor's proposals just this month. Why? What's next for the Governor and his team? What's next for growth management in Florida?

1. What initiated the Growth Management Effort? When did it begin?

In 1985, the Florida State Legislature mandated that every local government in the state develop comprehensive land use plans to direct future development. In 1996, the Legislature initiated the Florida Sustainable Communities Demonstration project and, through a competitive selection process, designated six out of twenty-nine communities as 'sustainable communities.' The benefit of this designation was a reduction in state oversight and a partnership with state agencies to address issues of sustainability. (The Sustainable Communities project will be discussed further below.)

Last year, Governor Jeb Bush created the Growth Management Study Commission that was charged with reviewing Florida's growth management system. The Commission's charge was "to consider related trends and conditions affecting the environment, economy, and the quality of life in Florida and identify appropriate goals and desired outcomes for planning and directing the future growth of our state including delineation of issues of state significance."

The Commission finished its work in February 2001. Since then, it isn't clear what has happened. What is clear is that Governor Bush introduced two bills borne out of the Commission's work, which both failed – one addressing school siting and development and the other about fiscal impact analyses for development. According to the Governor's office, it appears that the next step may be to develop technical support services.

2. Regional characteristics

The state of Florida is a diverse community with a growing minority population. The state is comprised of over 15 million residents (with over 16% Hispanic) and is separated into 11 Regional Planning Councils.

The state has designated six sustainable communities, which, along 23 others have become part of the Florida Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project Network. On a map, these 29 communities cover every part of the state.

This analysis focuses on State level efforts because it relates the most closely to "regional visioning" around growth.

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3. The players

Governor Jeb Bush is clearly a leader on the issue of growth management. It seems that, following the sustainable communities movement in the late 1990's and given the politics surrounding it, he wanted to create his own interpretation of the issue; hence, the creation of the Growth Management Study Commission.

Secretary of Community Affairs, Steve Seibert, has demonstrated a strong interest in evolving growth management policies. On his own, he conducted a 'stakeholder' survey to discover attitudes about growth, and he also attended Regional Forums throughout the state addressing future growth and related matters.

Advocacy groups have also played an important role in Florida growth policy. Groups such as the 1000 Friends of Florida have been "watchdogs" and Floridians for Better Transportation, which advocates for the business interest in growth matters, have played an important role. These and other groups testified to the Study Commission at public hearings.

4. Funding sources and levels

The State of Florida's Department of Community Affairs has an annual budget of \$2.2 million. No federal funds supported the Growth Management Study Commission. The Department did receive \$500,000 from the Legislature, which they then parcel out to communities as seed money to support and encourage growth management planning.

5. Data availability/gathering

The State has supported this effort with a variety of data, both qualitative and quantitative. When considering data, it's important to remember the importance of qualitative data to inform interpretation of the quantitative data. Following are some examples of what has been produced:

"Stakeholders" Survey – As mentioned previously, a survey of interested stakeholders was completed to identify potential areas of reform in the growth management system.

The following materials were produced by the State of Florida's Department of Community Affairs for the Growth Management Study Commission:

Growth Management Programs: A Comparison of Selected States – A national survey of growth management programs including the following states: Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington. The intense survey detailed overviews of State planning processes, various States' role in regional and local planning, sprawl, agricultural protection, property rights and citizen access. The citizen access analysis profiled the ability of residents to get information about planning efforts and to be informed about those efforts. The report also included a chart comparing the states, but in a digestible matrix that provided Commission members with easy reference material about efforts in other states.

Summary of Growth Management Survey – The summary of 'stakeholder' feedback from the survey organized by the Secretary of Community Affairs.

Additionally, the Florida Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project Network provides training, technical assistance, and staff support to the 29 cities which originally applied for the Demonstration Project. They provide general information on the Internet about governmental structures within the state, maps of city and regional governments (MPOs and county info), sustainable communities, and

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water agencies. This project also houses the Sustainability Development Database, which supports the provision of planning data using a software tool known as INDEX.

6. Major phases/components

Florida Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project (1996-present)

The 1996 Florida Legislature authorized the Department of Community Affairs to initiate a demonstration project that would give Florida models of sustainable communities. The project has six principles of sustainability: restoration of ecosystems, achievement of a cleaner, healthier environment; limitation of urban sprawl; protection of wildlife and natural areas; advancement of the efficient use of land and other resources; and the creation of quality communities and jobs. The six Designated Sustainable Communities received a reduction of state oversight and the opportunity to partner with state agencies to develop approaches to growth management and sustainability.

Statewide Regional Forums on the Future of Growth Management (Early 2000)

Twenty-two Regional Forums were held throughout the state in January and February 2000. Over 2,000 people attended forums with hundreds of people giving comments directly to the Secretary of Community Affairs.

Growth Management Study Commission (mid 2000 – early 2001)

The Growth Management Study Commission was created by Governor Bush to review Florida's growth management policies and practices and to provide State recommendations on growth policy. The Commission was then divided into five different Subcommittees: 1) State, Regional, and Local Roles; 2) Infrastructure; 3) Citizen Involvement; 4) Rural Policy; and 5) Urban Revitalization.

The Subcommittee on Citizen Involvement was chaired by Governor Bush's Everglades Policy Coordinator and identified three principal goals for public involvement: bottom up, transparent, and early – the earlier in the process that citizen involvement occurs, the smoother and more productive that process will ultimately be.

The Growth Management Study Commission submitted its Final Report called "A Livable Florida for Today and Tomorrow" to the Governor in February 2001. The Commission concluded that the state's growth management system should "remain fully in effect" but made eight specific recommendations for the 2001 Legislature to consider. These include:

- Revise the State Comprehensive Plan to more clearly establish a primary vision statement for Florida with a healthy, vibrant and sustainable economy as its priority.
- Develop a uniform methodology for reviewing the costs and benefits of local land use decisions.
- Empower citizens to better understand and participate in the growth management process.
- Focus the State's review of local comprehensive plan amendments on projects that implicate compelling state interests.
- Design and implement regional cooperation agreements for developments with extra-jurisdictional impacts.
- Require that each local government adopt a financially feasible public school facilities element to integrate school planning into the comprehensive planning process.

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- Authorize incentives for an effective urban revitalization policy.
- Develop an incentive based state rural policy that restores rural land values and protects private property rights.

Without much of a state legislative role in the process, the Legislature responded coldly to the recommendations. Hence, the Commission's recommendations to do extensive community visioning for future planning has stalled. "Public involvement" needed to extend to all the stakeholders, and this crucial one was left out.

Meanwhile, the Department of Community Affairs has continued to push for growth management dialogue, but there has been little interest or general support for the Commission's recommendations.

7. Results

Legislature turns down two Commission recommendations

A clear setback was the recent failure of two of the Commission's recommendations to pass the Legislature. According to the Governor's staff, the next likely step is to develop a State technical assistance program for communities to better manage growth, given that neither the Republican Governor nor House will pass legislation that "mandates" a review process in the growth management system.

Department of Community Affairs keeps it moving

It is clear that the Growth Management Study Commission's work has resulted in some tangible results. First, the Division of Community Planning within the Secretary's office has continued the growth management discussion. Later this month, the Department is holding a "Growth Management Workshop" to continue educating their own internal divisions.

Governor continues the discussion

The Governor and his Office of Urban Opportunity unveiled a "Front Porch Florida" program, which focuses redevelopment in urban communities. The heart of the program is to improve the quality of life of inner cities through greater community partnership in an alliance of neighborhoods. This program may have more success because it does not depend on Legislative approval – it engages communities in a bottom up process to coordinate with neighboring communities in finding common solutions to common problems.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Lack of legislative support – The greatest obstacle for the Growth Management Study Commission has by far been the lack of legislative support to pass bills that would implement the Commission's recommendations. Today, the responsibility lies with the Governor's office, advocacy groups, and the residents that did participate in the process to effectively communicate to the Legislature that substantial changes in State law are needed to empower local communities to manage future growth.

Dependence on a State-level dialogue – State-led efforts always face the challenge of connecting with localities, especially given the inherent distrust that often exists between cities and the State. State-level efforts offer an unparalleled opportunity to create a broad dialogue and provide a high level platform, but those same strengths often make it difficult to implement what results from them.

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Strengths

Leadership – Gubernatorial leadership either directly or through the Secretary of Community Affairs has given growth management a fairly high priority in the administration and throughout local governments.

A solid plan – The Growth Management Study Commission, to its credit, did a thorough investigation of other efforts and compared those efforts against the existing conditions in Florida. Rather than gather information about other national growth management efforts, Florida took the extra step of analyzing the differences and similarities as compared to their own state's practices. This helped inform their own findings and provided a substantial base, along with the extensive public input they received, for their efforts.

Groundwork had been laid – The Florida Sustainable Communities Center was instrumental in laying the groundwork for an awareness of "sustainability" throughout the state. Although no longer funded through Florida A & M University, the initiative enabled the Commission to move into fertile, informed territory. In addition, the designation of official "sustainable communities" also helped provide a general awareness that initially helped propel the effort.

Weaknesses

State Capitol support – The reliance on the State Legislature crippled the implementation effort of the work. The fact that this was a State-led effort at all provided certain strengths, but it also provided important weaknesses in credibility and local connections.

No technical support – There was no technical analysis provided to the Commission that made the case for future planning -- there was no technical basis indicating the need to plan for future growth. Therefore, the Commission had nothing on which to hang its report on and state strongly that the pressures of future growth demanded the recommendations be supported. Performance measures of some nature would have been useful.

Inherently flawed "exclusive" committee structure – The inherent problem with this kind of "exclusive" committee structure is that they generally fail to tantalize the public interest and more importantly, provide little public support for the work. Unless a charismatic leader is the chair of the committee and then takes the recommendations from that committee as a personal crusade, the work usually ends up on a shelf.

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

The process in Florida centered on a blue ribbon committee structure that received comment and then generated a report to the Governor. While this approach will not suit Southern California's desire for an open process, the important feature is that it was voluntary and unforced. It was an underlying principle of the Commission that the State would have a limited and supportive role in growth management. Therefore, the focus was on state planning issues such as infrastructure, transportation, and natural resources.

Following the sunset of the Growth Management Study Commission, what can be learned from Florida:

Analysis is important – Any effort that fails to include strong, non-partisan data analysis is open to criticism. The Department of Community Affairs is going back to develop modeling tools that will give them cost/benefit scenarios for development.

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Needs a variety of elected officials – While the Governor and his administration seem committed to growth management practices, they still need the support of the Legislature to get anything done. Include more of the local and regional elected officials in the process.

Even the best laid plans ... can get knocked down if they depend too much on one entity. The recommendations from the Commission are comprehensive and smart, but relying on the Legislature to implement them was not enough. The Commission needed to identify tools that local communities could employ to get the Legislature to move on the broader proposals. Or, optimally, the Commission could have laid out a vision and then provided various avenues to implement various components of the document. In other words, laying out a series of recommendations and then depending on the Legislature – or any one governmental body – to implement all the components is quite risky. A variety of implementing mechanisms need to be identified.

Florida is an interesting case study in that it demonstrates that, while the charismatic Governor of the state may bring his Administration on board, the rest of the dots must still be connected. The community, stakeholders, and local elected officials were still outside players in this effort – they need to be brought in early and meaningfully.

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Valley Vision 2025 – Phoenix Summary

What They Did

The Phoenix MPO undertook a comprehensive, bottom up visioning exercise, resulting in a “Valley Vision 2025” document ... and not much else.

Who Led It

Valley Vision 2025's Steering Committee consisted of 80 regional leaders from both the public and private sectors, appointed by the MPO's Regional Council.

Website Address of the Effort

[Valley Vision 2025](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Undertook an extensive research process.* A preliminary blue ribbon commission formed to investigate growth visioning spent nearly a year researching other efforts around the nation.
2. *Laid out a four step process.* The Commission then suggested developing a vision, a framework for achieving the vision, an action plan for implementing the vision, and benchmarks to measure their progress. They then began the visioning.
3. *Regional Scan and Citizens' Preference Survey.* At the kickoff symposium, the MPO presented results of a “regional scan” that was really an agglomerated summary of trends and had the public undertake an ad hoc preference survey.
4. *Thematic Subcommittees and Collaborative Groups.* They formed two sets of working groups – stakeholder-based (Thematic) and geographically-based (Collaborative). Each group held public meetings and developed feedback surveys.
5. *Goal Development.* All this work was then hammered into a set of draft goals, which were taken out for public comment once again. Over 100,000 flyers as well as extensive newspaper advertising publicized the forums.
6. *A Vision was published,* calling for a separate public-private partnership to carry the Vision forward, a statistically valid values survey, and development of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. None of these things has happened.

Results

1. The Vision document and the process to develop it resulted in what participants feel was a valuable conversation about the future of the region.
2. Some individual cities are now undertaking visioning exercises as a result of what they learned through the visioning process ... but many more results aren't immediately apparent.

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Lessons

1. *Involve the right people.* Phoenix did a good job of involving the private sector – but didn't get senior level executives who could publicly champion the effort on board.
2. *Involve local governments.* Even though the Steering Committee was fairly broad, the effort was always seen as MPO-driven. Importantly, the largest City in the region, Phoenix, never fully embraced the effort.
3. *If it's broken, fix it!* It became clear fairly quickly that there were problems – one early article called the effort “racked with criticism.” There were concerns over the composition of the Steering Committee, the legitimacy of the process, etc. Instead of taking the time to correct these issues, the MPO charged forward.

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VALLEY VISION 2025 PHOENIX

How to take the “right” steps and still end up irrelevant

Conventional wisdom would indicate that the Maricopa Association of Governments did everything “right” in developing their growth visioning effort. They spent an extensive period analyzing other efforts around the country and took the lessons to heart. They developed a bottom up process with clear milestones and a well-articulated timeline. They enlisted the help of the local media, and they put together an extensive array of public and private sector leaders to spearhead the effort. They developed scenarios, provided good data, and found consensus on a wide variety of fronts. Yet, after five years in development, just one year later the Vision is barely an afterthought on the regional radar screen. How could this be? Phoenix tells us that leadership isn’t enough – it has to be the right leadership – and reminds us of a variation on an old adage: if it’s broken, fix it!

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) convened a “Blue Ribbon Commission” in 1995 to assess the scope and feasibility of a growth visioning effort. MAG decided to convene the Commission after a number of studies – an Urban Form Study, a Desert Spaces Plan, and a Congestion Management Study – depicted the impacts of future growth very starkly. Rather than merely plan for that future, the MPO recognized that planning for a better future was necessary.

After an extensive assessment process, the Commission recommended undertaking a four-step process: development of a vision for the future, determining the framework for achieving that vision, developing an action plan for implementing the framework, and determining benchmarks for measuring the results of that action.

The MPO adopted this plan and began the Valley Vision 2025 development process in January 1998.

2. Regional characteristics

The Maricopa Association of Governments covers 24 cities in Maricopa County, as well as the Gila River and Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Communities. The urbanized area is 50 miles by 65 miles – generally considered a 50-mile radius from Phoenix. The region currently contains 2.7 million people, projected to grow to 4 million by 2015.

Obviously, the region is dominated by Phoenix. It is fairly politically conservative, but growth pressures have become a concern, especially air quality. A number of ballot initiatives aimed at improving growth have been proposed, with varying results – a “Growing Smarter” Act passed in 1998 while a “Growing Smarter Plus” Act in 2000 was defeated due to a competing measure sponsored by the Sierra Club. Growing Smarter provides for stronger local general plans, open space preservation, and higher developer fees for new growth. Generally, loss of open space and traffic are the primary concerns among citizens.

3. The players

Valley Vision 2025’s Steering Committee consisted of over 80 leaders from business, government, academia, elected office, the environment, labor, Indian tribes, the community, school districts, and

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others. Over 300 nominations were made by MAG Regional Council members before the final 80 were selected.

In addition, stakeholder-based “Thematic Subcommittees” and geographically-based “Collaborative Groups” were formed to get feedback from across the region on a variety of issues and from a variety of places.

4. Funding sources and levels

The MPO spent roughly \$600,000 over two years on the visioning effort itself. They spent more on the preparation, research, etc. but for comparison purposes, \$600,000 is the most appropriate number to consider. That, of course, does not include staff time spent on the project.

5. Data availability/gathering

The Steering Committee asked MAG to put together a “Regional Scan” to summarize existing conditions in the region. MAG looked at existing City-level plans and visions, general plans, community mission statements, and other documents. They provided a then-current snapshot of 1998 and they projected current trends out to 2025. The Regional Scan looked at growth characteristics and trends, demographics, job growth, housing cost, availability and affordability, transportation, education, crime, air quality, water, agriculture, open space, urban form, public finance, and even civic infrastructure.

MAG mostly used existing data, gathering it into one place. While extraordinarily comprehensive, they did not tie the elements together, nor did they attempt to study interactions between the elements. However, the Regional Scan did seem to provide them a valuable jumping off point for the discussion.

6. Major phases/components

Blue Ribbon Commission

Although it preceded the actual “visioning effort” by three years, the Blue Ribbon Commission set it in motion. The Commission was formed by the MPO after a number of internally generated reports highlighted future regional growth pressures. The Commission was comprised of local government, corporate, transportation, housing, environmental, and other outside interests. The Commission was charged with determining the scope and feasibility of a regional growth visioning effort.

Preliminary Survey of Regional Growth Planning Processes

The Commission then investigated 15 other regions that were somehow involved with regional growth planning. During a 3-4 month period (!) in late 1995 and early 1996, a report was prepared called “Preliminary Survey of Regional Growth Planning Processes” that summarized their findings and helped focus their further research.

Survey of Five Regional Planning Processes

Out of the original 15, five regions were selected for special emphasis: Atlanta, Denver, Portland, San Diego and Seattle. In addition to more interviews and further research, each site was visited by a small group of Subcommittee members and in-person interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including MPOs, elected officials, media representatives, outside groups, and others. This resulted in a report entitled “Survey of Five Regional Planning Processes” which helped them determine how to make their own visioning effort successful. One important finding from the report: “The importance of involving individual citizens and local governments cannot be over emphasized.” (emphasis in original) And later: “Above all, the Commission believes the process must be citizen-driven. Without

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the active support and involvement of citizens at the local level, the plan will fail to address relevant issues in ways that are critical to our success.”

The Committee then made their final recommendations, which included the four-step process mentioned above: vision, framework, action, implementation, and benchmarks.

Citizens’ Summit -- Regional Scan & Citizens’ Future Preference Survey

A Citizens’ Summit was the first major event of the visioning effort. Held in mid-1998, it was both a kick off and a way to get regional citizens interested in the growth visioning effort. Nearly 300 people attended the event.

The Regional Scan was presented at this Summit. As described above, the Commission looked at current trends and characteristics, how they would impact future growth, and the factors affecting the growth dynamic and gathered all of those into the Regional Scan document.

Audience members were also given handheld, wireless voting mechanisms to provide feedback on a series of questions about major growth issues affecting the region. The questions were not extraordinarily well received – many felt they were either too vague or too directed – but it indicates the MPO’s emphasis on citizen feedback.

Thematic Subcommittees/Collaborative Groups

In order to broaden its reach and maximize public input, “thematic subcommittees” and “collaborative groups” were formed. The thematic subcommittees were essentially stakeholder groups around particular issues where the Steering Committee wanted to identify “shared community values” – culture, economy, education, human services, natural features, public safety/civic infrastructure, public utility/governance, transportation, and urban features. The thematic subcommittees then helped develop an 18-question survey around these nine themes that the collaborative groups could take into the community. Nearly 3,000 of these surveys were distributed.

The collaborative groups, consisting of city planners, community activists, local elected officials and others, were charged with getting a broad range of citizen input from individual communities. The groups used public meetings as well as the 18-question survey, interviews, and the like to obtain feedback. A total of 28 collaborative groups were formed.

Goal Development

Once all this feedback was compiled, and the thematic subcommittees had published their reports, the Vision Steering Committee honed the information into 43 Draft Goals, grouped around what they called the “Five Ps”: Principles, People, Place, Prosperity, and Partnerships.

These goals were then brought back to the public for further feedback and refinement through 12 community forums throughout the region. The forums were publicized through newspaper ads, over 100,000 flyers, and announcements by local elected officials at various functions. At the forums, the public was asked to rank the goals, provide feedback on them, add what they felt was missing, and discuss those they thought were irrelevant.

Final Report

This led to the publication of the final Valley Vision 2025 document in February 2000. The document is highly general, with broad goals spelled out for the future of the region. However, some specific recommendations were included. Given the somewhat ad hoc nature of the public feedback during their process, they recommended a statistically valid public opinion survey to learn, among other things, “what is valued about the region.” They also recommended a separate public/private

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partnership (a sustaining organization) to ensure that the four step process continued to progress. Finally, they recommended developing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure that the vision document remained vital and evolving.

7. Results

As mentioned above, the final Valley Vision 2025 document was a strong call to action for the region. It included specific recommendations, action items, and a clear indication of how they had developed the vision. But the process has not gone anywhere since the publication of the vision in February 2000, which was supposed to be just the first stage in a four-step process.

There is evidence of some efforts that have indirectly spawned from the visioning effort. The MPO is now developing a 40-year RTP – a first – and reviewing all local general plans to determine how they fit into the regional framework. Also, some individual cities are now undertaking long term planning for the first time.

Yet, not much else has happened. A clear process was laid out after an extensive period of information gathering. The first phase of that process – visioning -- was carried out in detail, using a bottom up process that had firm top down support. But the other three steps of the original process now look very unlikely to ever occur and, as is always cautioned against and as so often happens, the Vision now sits collecting dust on a shelf. The reasons for that follow below.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Perceived weakness of MPO – MAG is not particularly well-known, nor does it wield much power within its region. The cities are skeptical of its intrusion and it does not have a strong reputation for good, coordinated planning. They tried to overcome that by including a wide variety of civic leaders in the governance of the visioning project, to only moderate effect.

Low-level business community buy-in – While there was private sector involvement in the process, it was at the “middle” or “upper middle” levels of management. They had a very difficult time getting senior level private sector leaders to be involved in the process. They never really overcame this.

Big players absent – The city of Phoenix never fully bought into the effort. Phoenix's voice was never fully heard in the debate, which kept the effort's profile lower than hoped for. This also kept the smaller cities from seeing a compelling reason to be involved.

Strengths

Inclusiveness – This process really made a good faith effort to involve all the communities in its region, involved a wide variety of stakeholders from those communities, and cross-cut those stakeholder groups in various ways to maximize the value of the feedback.

Scope – They realized that “visioning” is, by nature, comprehensive. While it informs a variety of specific processes and documents, it must include a panoply of issues to accurately reflect an integrated picture of the region's future. This breadth of scope is what kept a wide range of stakeholders involved throughout the process.

Private Sector Involvement – The MPO realized that, while it was the spearheading agency, going it alone would have doomed the process from the beginning. So it reached out early to civic leaders to get involved with the effort and help carry the message to the broader community.

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Institutional Support – The MPO, as an institution, was very supportive of this effort. They not only devoted staff and financial resources, but perhaps more importantly, they put the visioning process front and center as the institution’s “signature effort.” This ensured that it got a fair amount of media attention and indicated to regional leaders that it would be worth their time to be involved.

Weaknesses

Generality – Although visions are, by nature, broad, Valley Vision 2025 is generalist to a fault. Its regional goals include statements like “Our people are informed, engaged, and responsible citizens” and “We invest in an urban form that creates distinctive neighborhoods with individual, recognizable characteristics.” All “visions” contain general statements about the values of the region, but this one does not provide any greater level of specificity than those general statements.

Scope – This strength was also a weakness. They now realize that, by including issues such as education, cultural amenities, and the like, they made the effort even broader than it should have been. As the MPO’s ED now says, if they would have only tackled growth challenges, it would have been a “slam dunk.”

Lack of buy-in – The cities that comprise the MAG region never fully bought in to the visioning process. It was seen as driven by a small group of players within MAG, with few early attempts to include a broader cross section of local elected officials from throughout the region.

No recommendations – This is related to the over-general nature of the document mentioned earlier, but it more specifically relates to the lack of clear action items. It essentially calls for a better public survey and establishing an external public/private partnership to continue the effort. There weren’t specific action items that the MAG Regional Council, business leaders, stakeholders, and others could grasp on to and carry forward.

No political will building – Once the visioning process started to gather criticism, there was a sense of just getting through it ... essentially throwing good money after bad. Instead of slowing down, garnering feedback on the process itself, determining what the concerns were and trying to fix them, the Steering Committee merely set its sights on finishing its work and publishing the document.

Poor process organization – By their own admission, they tried to do too many things at once. The “Thematic Subcommittees” were developing the important issues surrounding particular themes at the same time as the “Collaborative Groups” were out in the communities getting feedback. And all this was happening while the Steering Committee was setting direction. They should have done it in phases; although it’s unclear that the political will existed to conduct an even longer process, the process could have also been organized differently within the same timeframe.

9. Conclusion and Lessons for SCAG

The Valley Vision 2025 process is a very instructive one. An MPO with a low profile, questionable credibility, and to which its member cities often turned a skeptical eye decided to undertake a visioning process. However, their process contained many of the elements that are common to successful visioning efforts, no doubt due to their extensive preliminary research. They got the private sector involved; they undertook an extensive bottom up process that had top down support; they devoted substantial resources to the effort; and they gave the proper amount of time to it given the scope of the project. Yet, by most measures, it still failed. In order for this effort to serve as a lesson instead of a model, the following lessons can be taken from it:

Build the foundation. The MPO thought they could just undertake this effort, get the right people involved, and everything would fall in line. They didn’t build the foundation that would allow the effort to be successful, especially once it started running into criticism.

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Get the right people involved – Phoenix got a broad cross section of private sector buy-in, but didn't get a "high enough" level of support to carry the effort's message to the region. They had hoped that the emissaries could bring the senior executives and others on board, but it didn't work like that – because the senior level people had not helped develop the process, they saw little reason to join in at the end.

Find the leadership – Nobody really made this effort "their own." In order for these efforts to succeed, individual leaders must champion them within their communities and/or stakeholder communities. The MPO's Executive Director was very involved, but he was too "inside" to single-handedly give credibility to the effort.

Involve local governments early and often. City officials cannot feel like this is something that's happening "to" them, or that this is something the MPO "wants" them to do. They have to believe in it and they have to buy in.

Accurately estimate the necessary resources – One of the reasons the process never moved past the visioning stage was that the MPO wasn't willing to devote the necessary resources to next steps. This is partly because the political will to use resources on visioning had withered, but it was also partly because the MPO underestimated the extent of what they were embarking upon.

Let an outside group run the effort – Once they finished the visioning process – which included both public and private leaders – the Vision Committee recommended setting up a separate public/private partnership to carry the process forward. The process had simply got too mired in politics when it was housed within the MPO. A model that has proven more successful is for the MPO to possibly spearhead the creation of an outside partnership, be an integral player in the partnership, but, most importantly, to house effort in an external organization.

If it's broken, fix it! – The Valley Vision 2025 was mired in criticism from its first public meeting. As the process moved forward, that criticism mounted until the project limped to a finish early last year. It became clear to many that the process wasn't producing the results intended, yet they simply kept going because they felt like they were already too far down the road. So they spent less time and money than they would have if they would have slowed down and tried to fix the process – but now the effort is dead. Again, they threw good money after bad, with predictable results. A visioning process is, by nature, iterative – if something isn't working, the process has to be flexible enough to allow for evolution.

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Metro 2040 – Portland, OR Summary

What They're Doing

Metro 2040 is the comprehensive, long-range growth management plan but is really an amalgamation of the: 2040 (Preferred) Growth Concept, Functional Plan, and Framework Plan.

Who's Leading It?

Metro spearheaded Metro 2040. In this unique situation, the MPO was able to marshal together the resources and political capital to make the planning/visioning effort initially successful.

Website Address of the Effort

[Metro 2040](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Future Vision* – Mandated by the regional charter, "Future Vision" was supposed to set broad direction, but it became too broad and, finally, irrelevant.
2. *Extensive Values Survey* – Random survey conducted to inquire about citizen's attitudes toward the Urban Growth Boundary. Should it be maintained or expanded?
3. *Development of Alternative Growth Concepts* – Merging the survey results with their unique modeling tool known as LUTRAQ (one of the first tools to quantify the linkage between transportation and land use), Metro developed four Growth Concepts.
4. *Extensive public outreach* – Using newspaper, radio, TV, videos, presentations, and even three dimensional maps, Metro garnered public input on the concepts.
5. *Preferred "Growth Concept" emerges* – After an initially negative reception, a preferred Concept emerged, comprised of pieces of the original four alternatives.
6. *Functional Plan* – Essentially, this was implementation of the Concept Plan through a revision of regional zoning codes.
7. *Framework Plan* – This was a broader document to attempt to translate the Concept into discrete policies, but did not detail implementation.

Results

1. The Functional Plan is a regulatory document that revised a number of regional policies to align with the Preferred Growth Concept, but it's unclear whether these policies were implemented or are being enforced. Additionally, Metro is beginning another review of Portland's UGB. As part of that, Metro is returning to its cities and surveying improvements/changes as a result of Metro 2040 ... but they essentially feel that they are starting over again with Metro 2040.

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Lessons

1. *One-to-one* – Metro learned that the way to get public officials and agency representatives to buy in was one-to-one interaction and persuasion. Metro feels that there was a direct relationship between strength of the partnership and time spent developing it one-to-one.
2. *The work is never done* – The best publicly oriented visioning efforts will die for lack of follow up and momentum. The vision has to become part of the organization's culture, not merely a single activity.
3. *Do it right the first time* – Some individual cities sued Metro – and won – over certain land use designations. Metro could have dealt with their concerns earlier, but chose to move forward. Addressing concerns early is crucial.

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METRO 2040 PORTLAND, OREGON

*Portland pioneered growth visioning over 20 years ago.
Today, they are beginning the process again -- from scratch.*

Portland is the model against which all other planning efforts are measured. It was the first in many categories of community input and in developing innovative ways to get people to come to dry, sleepy planning meetings. Early on, Portland recognized the power of grassroots planning. Today, Metro, the MPO for the greater Portland region, is facing greater scrutiny from around the country – you're an easy target when you are 'perfect'. The reality is that sprawl hasn't died in Portland, the suburbs are doing just fine and congestion hasn't been eliminated. So, have Metro's growth management tactics failed? Or, is it that even Metro has to go back to the basics of community planning and start the process of civic engagement all over again?

1. What initiated the Visioning Effort? When did it begin?

Portland has a long history of planning efforts. We will focus on the most current – Metro 2040. Approved by voters 1992, Metro's "home rule" charter designates growth management as the agency's number one priority. This has signaled the beginning of a 50-year growth planning effort.

Created in 1979, Metro is the only elected regional government in the county. Originally, Metro was responsible for enforcement of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Today, that role has broadened to include overall growth management for the region.

In 1992, Metro conducted a comprehensive values survey to give the agency direction over whether they should maintain or expand the current UGB. This led to a process of scenario development that eventually evolved into the Metro 2040 "growth visioning" process – although it's unclear how much was "visioning" and how much was simply scenario development.

2. Regional characteristics

Metro serves a region of 1.3 million, comprised of 3 counties and 24 cities. The city of Portland is by far the largest city in the state with over 530,000 residents. Growth estimates are approximately 1.5% annually.

Preservation of open space and concentration of development within the UGB has resulted in widespread public awareness of the issue, but there is a growing sentiment of "oversaturation" coming from local elected officials within the Metro region. For the widespread impression that Portland residents understand and embrace "smart growth", they have many of the same concerns over traffic and housing as elsewhere in the country.

3. The players

Metro 2040 has been an MPO-led effort. However, this is somewhat misleading as Metro has a long history of working with a wide variety of citizen and stakeholder groups, meaning that the natural infrastructure of involved citizens will be much broader than in other regions.

While there are many players in Metro 2040 John Fregnoese stands out as the leader that was there during crucial moments in the development of the plan. Fregnoese was the Director of Metro's

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Growth Management Department during the initial phases of developing the Metro 2040 visioning effort and was able to ensure that a wide variety of stakeholders and interested individuals played a role in the process. There were no private sector “champions” of the planning effort although there were many business interests participating in the process. However, again, one or two compelling leaders can make a significant difference.

4. Funding sources and levels

Metro cobbles together funding for their visioning efforts through a combination of excise taxes, special taxes, grants, and federal (ISTEA) monies. The MPO isn't sure how much they specifically spent on Metro 2040, partly because they do not track that data and partly because the process was so iterative.

During the most part extensive phase of the Metro 2040 visioning, Metro coordinated with the Tri-Met, the regional transportation authority, and with the state Office of Environmental Planning to leverage funding for the outreach and visioning efforts. By creating these state agency partnerships, Metro was able to conduct an extensive public education campaign for Metro 2040.

5. Data availability/gathering

Values Survey

Metro conducted a values survey to determine public support for extending or maintaining the UGB. The random survey was inconclusive – nearly half of the respondents said that the UGB should be maintained, but that extending the boundary should also be considered. Locally elected officials commented that the creation and support of “satellite” cities should be explored -- clearly, the intent was to minimize the growth pressures on their own communities. So, while the values survey was useful, it was not constructed in a way that gave them clear answers.

Modeling advances in linking land use with transportation

Metro has a unique modeling tool, developed through earlier planning processes and created through the technical expertise of 1000 Friends of Oregon (a non-profit environmental group) called “Making the Land Use and Transportation Air Quality Connection,” or LUTRAQ. This federally funded demonstration project has received national attention because it was the first time that the benefits of linking transportation infrastructure and land use development were supported by technical analysis. It was the first modeling tool used for linking transportation and land use. This has become an invaluable internal tool that Metro uses for a variety of modeling exercises, including the scenario development that was part of the Metro 2040 process.

6. Major phases/components

Future Vision

Mandated by the regional charter, Future Vision was supposed to be the forum by which to spur interest in the growth management plan that Metro was charged with developing. While a number of documents (including the other documents developed later) must state their official relationship to Future Vision, the community did not respond to the project because it failed to attach specific, results-oriented goals to the far-reaching principles.

According to the Growth Concept Report, Future Vision was described as “a conceptual statement considering the region's quality of life, sustainability and carrying capacity.” A citizen's Future Vision Commission was formed and performance measures were identified against which communities could determine their progress toward maintaining a livable region.

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As an example of the problem with Future Vision, the Commission would describe images of the future that included pristine waters, forests, and skies with a clear view of the mountains – with no practical path to achieve those identified goals.

Initial scenario development (1992-94)

With the Future Vision document having been written and subsequently overlooked, Metro then began fulfilling its growth management planning mandate by developing four alternative growth concepts, one of which was a base case scenario. This was a very internalized process; Metro viewed itself as preparing ideas for public feedback. They analyzed each concept for its effects on land consumption, VMT, open space, and urban design. The concepts focused on how much, if at all, the UGB should be expanded and what kind of development would occur within the UGB area.

Public outreach (1994)

In mid-1994, Metro conducted significant public outreach around the four growth concepts. They used TV, radio, and print paid advertising, they distributed free videos through Blockbuster, they made what they estimate to be hundreds of presentations to community and civic organizations, they built a mailing list of 65,000 residents, they distributed a growth management survey at various venues throughout the region, and they even placed maps using three dimensional visualization with 3-D glasses at coffee shops throughout the region. They also mailed a questionnaire to every household in the region -- over 500,000 – and received 17,000 responses

Growth Concept Plan (1994-1995)

Because of the lack of adequate modeling tools at the time, the true benefits of linking land use with transportation were not completely apparent to the participants. When the four Concepts were rolled out, people responded angrily toward the proposals and ultimately rejected them.

As so often in visioning efforts, no single option was chosen – the end result was an agglomeration of the Concepts that became the preferred “Growth Concept.” Within the Growth Concept, Metro identified certain “Urban Reserves Designations” – areas outside the UGB that would be set aside for future development. This decision was completed without the necessary consensus building needed for such a controversial topic. As a result, Metro was sued by a handful of cities, which ultimately won -- the designations were rescinded.

The Metro Council did adopt the Growth Concept Plan in late 1995, and it has served as the comprehensive plan for the region ever since.

Functional Plan (1996-97)

Attempting to address this criticism, Metro worked with elected officials and City staff to develop the Urban Growth Functional Plan – essentially, an array of specific policies and requirements to meet the goals established by the Growth Concept Plan. Because of Metro’s regional governance capability, this became an extensive effort to revise the regional zoning codes in alliance with the Growth Concept. The Plan also developed a variety of policies to address issues like large-scale retail development, interjurisdictional cooperation, and affordable housing. The Metro Council adopted this plan in early 1997.

Framework Plan (1997)

At roughly the same time, Metro was developing a set of policies to direct Metro’s own planning efforts. The Framework Plan is a 188-page document that sets policy for a variety of issues from transportation to water quality to management issues. The Framework Plan was adopted in December, 1997 and became the basis for the 1998 RTP update. However, the Framework calls out few if any implementation mechanisms for this wide array of policies.

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Metro 2040 (Putting it all together)

The Growth Concept Plan (a comprehensive planning document), the Functional Plan (updated regional zoning codes and policies) and the Framework Plan (the large scale policy and planning document) were then combined to become “Metro 2040”. The Metro 2040 plan contains commitments from localities to meet local housing demand and make zoning changes to encourage more infill and densification.

While ad hoc efforts are continuing to be made to implement Metro 2040, including the publication of workbooks for local planners, citizen involvement guides, and funding demonstration projects, implementation seems ad hoc at best, and “Metro 2040” seems more like the name for a collection of documents than an actual “vision” or “process.”

7. Results

While some cities within the Metro region have enacted smart growth principles born out of the visioning process, Metro 2040 has not entirely resulted in a measurable improvement in growth decisions. Some cities in the region have decided to “do their own thing.”

The Framework and the Functional Plan are valuable planning documents that supposedly have implementing power (especially the Functional Plan), but it’s unclear exactly whether the changes have been implemented and/or what they have resulted in.

Moreover, it appears that there is currently a test of Metro’s planning ethos. Specifically, there are efforts underway that would strike at heart of Metro:

- A petition is being circulated that proposes a California “Proposition 13”-like measure in Oregon, which would clearly affect the Metro budget and ability to do regional planning.
- The State Legislature is currently considering creation of a Regional Transportation Authority, which would add another layer of planning bureaucracy and strip Metro of some its current responsibilities.

Metro 2040 seems to have created a valuable regional dialogue and caused hard thinking about regional policy making, but the true outgrowth of this public dialogue may be increased citizen dissatisfaction.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Listening to the echo chamber – Metro has received a great deal of national attention. Whether for urban growth boundaries, visioning, planning for land use and transportation, political leadership, or creative planning ideas, Metro has been deluged with awards. And sometimes perspective can be lost. As one Metro official stated, “if you start believing the press, then you’re really in trouble.” An outside perspective is important.

Rogue Jurisdictions – Not all cities in the Metro region complied with the Metro 2040 plan and some even sued Metro over the urban reserves designations and won. These cities continued to do “business as usual” without any concern about the regional planning effort and continue to be adversaries with the MPO.

Who cares about regional issues? – People care only about their neighborhood. The challenge of a regional agency is to bring the issues of the region down to the individual – down to the very street

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someone lives on – to make it meaningful. Metro knew that it could depend on the “wonky” types to show up at visioning meetings, but it was more important to reach down to the regular person to develop a real outline of the future. This proved difficult.

Strengths

Leadership – There continues to be strong leadership from the Growth Management department. Some leaders are now in Washington D. C. spreading the message of visioning and sustainability. Specifically, Congressman Earl Blumenauer has founded the House Subcommittee on Livable Communities.

Interjurisdictional cooperation – While some rogue jurisdictions caused Metro trouble, the bulk of the local governments did not. In fact, many of the cities worked cooperatively on open space, and transportation/ land use issues.

Civic engagement – In the world of visioning, Portland remains the model by which everything else is tested. Metro has a history of well informed and highly engaged citizenry.

Sustaining organizations – Portland is rich with advocacy organizations that support the visioning process because they believe that the foundation of public support is the basis upon which to advocate for the desires of the community. They have kept the agencies and officials honest in fulfilling the intent of the plans.

Weaknesses

Burning out good leaders – Metro has had four different directors in the past 20 years. Given the timeframe of planning efforts, five years is just enough time to finish one exercise. Metro staff knows it needs to have sustained leadership that can weather the good times with the bad. It is this consistency and stability that will keep Metro focused and on track with their mission.

Rigid, inflexible staff – Metro needed to be flexible and nimble as it worked with the community to develop a vision for its future. Metro admits it spent too much time and money chasing “red herrings” as a result of staff inflexibility or just following bad ideas.

Stopping the communication – Metro did not keep up its public communication effort once the majority of the visioning was completed. At the highest peak of community involvement, Metro had an ‘active’ mailing list of over 60,000 residents. Today, Metro feels it has to reengage the community – the same people it had worked so hard to involve just a few years prior. According to Metro, they are starting from scratch.

Letting the plan die – Today, Metro is beginning its five-year review of the UGB. As part of that exercise, it is reviewing the 2040 plan to determine performance measures against which the UGB can be examined. Metro did what every other planning organization is guilty of – neglecting to keep the plan “alive”. They are now dragging out Metro 2040 and, like a beat up old car, Metro is trying to get it running again. There is little interest in something that is dated and been out of circulation for a few years. One Metro employee stated, “Citizens don’t know Metro 2040.”

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

Metro went through an extensive process ... only to watch it get bogged down in controversy and end up nearly irrelevant. There are many lessons that Metro has learned the hard way:

Follow-up is important – Metro failed to monitor the progress, or lack of progress, in the local jurisdictions to meet the goals and objectives set out in Metro 2040. Various cities committed to do

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things like change zoning and parking requirements, land use development, etc. but Metro is unsure whether they have done so. Metro also failed to track its own progress – the answers to basic questions about benchmarks, funding, and other components of Metro 2040 are simply unknown.

One by one – Metro has discovered that it has been only the direct one by one relationships that have developed into meaningful partnerships. The amount of effort made by Metro to educate and include local officials and other agency representatives is directly related to the level of support Metro has received from those people.

Expensive but necessary – During the Metro 2040 process, Metro in cooperation with other agencies spent millions of dollars on public outreach – only on public outreach. The daunting challenge is to sustain a quality visioning effort over time with limited funding opportunities. However, while Metro did not build much on that well-established foundation, they recognized the necessity of establishing it in the first place.

Prioritization – Metro simply had too many projects underway. Requirements (state or self-imposed) that must be fulfilled press the agency to develop plans, and, while they are good work, some of the plans are left without closure. Linking growth visioning efforts with federal, state and local requirements is critical, but ensuring that the communities understand and are involved in the process is even more important.

Do it right the first time – Metro was sued over the Urban Reserves Designation zones that it established in the Functional Plan. The local jurisdictions protested that the process was flawed and that the supporting documentation did not validate the designations, and won. It was a heavy blow to Metro at the time, and proved that there is no magic bullet for hard work and consensus building -- steps could and should have been taken to address the concerns of those cities prior to establishing the designations.

Create partnerships – Metro hired some of the best-known architects and most able consultants to help them with their work. Moreover, groups like 1000 Friends of Oregon and Citizens for a Livable Future obtained funds to develop additional technical material that was crucial in the beginning. These partnerships between the agency, experts, and citizen advocates continue to play a vital role in the MPO's work today.

Coordinated planning – Even with all its problems, perhaps the most intriguing feature of Metro 2040 was its ability to link together so many other planning efforts that were either state-mandated or community-driven and turn them into implementable documents. The ability to connect the vision with implementation is important in that planners, politicians, and participants all have a built in assumption that the proposals that are discussed today will materialize in their communities in the future.

The Metro 2040 effort was ambitious, expensive, and resulted in a variety of useful tools and documents. However, by Metro's own admission, it was allowed to slip into oblivion. The potential for disconnect between process, outcome, implementation, and sustenance was made extraordinarily apparent through this process – even within the nation's heart of regional planning.

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Destination 2030 – Puget Sound, WA Summary

What They're Doing

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is developing a 30-year transportation plan, Destination 2030, which integrates growth management, regional coordination, and tiered implementation goals. The foundation of Destination 2030 is Vision 2020, which has served as the basis for all the MPO's planning efforts since 1990.

Who's Leading It?

The MPO is supported by the Governor and various high level County executives. Support from locally elected officials have put Destination 2030 at the top of the State's political agenda.

Website Address of the Effort

[Destination 2030](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Vision 2020.* Developed in 1990, then updated in 1993 and 1995, the Vision serves as the region's long-range growth management strategy. It remains a current, relevant document.
2. *Public Participation Plan.* The MPO adopted this detailed plan in 1994, which calls out a variety of principles and specific policies that govern all public outreach for the agency.
3. *Citizen Survey.* As the basis for Destination 2030, PSRC took a survey to discover the "pressure points" in the community, deriving from the Vision 2020 principles.
4. *Data Analysis.* For the first time, PSRC jointly analyzed all the transportation plans at the local, regional, and State levels. PSRC also analyzed a variety of performance measures.
5. *Scenario Development.* PSRC developed three scenarios based on funding potentials, incorporating survey feedback, and attaching a price tag per person for each scenario plan.
6. *Destination 2030.* Following extensive community input, the Regional Council is due to adopt the 30 year long range transportation plan on May 24, 2001.

Results

1. The Vision 2020 Awards help keep the Vision's profile fairly high and highlights how particular projects exemplify the Vision's principles.
2. A variety of internal committees also continue to focus on the Vision's development. In addition, one staff member is solely charged with monitoring and implementing it.
3. Destination 2030 is under consideration for adoption, so results from it are still to come. But the document itself is quite an achievement in its scope and integration.

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Lessons

1. *Keep constant and open lines of communication* – It's not enough to outreach once around a particular effort. The lines must be fluid and open.
2. *Public engagement = stability* – Undertaking extensive public engagement allows a variety of processes to proceed more smoothly. Instead of continuing to “throw the bums (or the plans) out”, Puget Sound's residents continue to be willing to evolve previous plans because they were developed with such public support.
3. *It's a journey, not a destination* – Developing a Vision is not the goal; developing a Vision *that lasts* is the goal. This requires it to be developed using a credible process, subsequent, internal MPO support and continued championing.

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DESTINATION 2030 PUGET SOUND, WASHINGTON

Based on Vision 2020, which still drives the MPO after eleven years and two updates, Destination 2030 shows what an RTP can be.

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is on the cusp of adopting Destination 2030. This ambitious 30 year long range transportation plan is based on Vision 2020 – the framework for growth and development in the Puget Sound Region. With leadership from a variety of dynamic elected officials from the Governor to the King County Executive, PSRC continues to implement and monitor their Vision, bases their long range planning on it, and is about to adopt an imaginative and integrated RTP. Is PSRC the “Portland Model” that has quietly been churning along, developing regional partnerships and planning practices for decades, that we just haven’t heard about?

1. What initiated the visioning effort(s)? When did they begin?

Vision 2020, which serves as the “long-range growth management, economic and transportation strategy” for the Puget Sound planning region, was first adopted in 1990 after a three-year planning process. It was updated in 1993 and again in 1995. Given that it was first undertaken in 1987, it’s unclear what exactly inspired its development. It has just seemingly “always” been part of the agency.

The 1993 update occurred because the State had passed a Growth Management Act in 1990, which requires more integrated planning both within and across counties and cities. This caused the MPO to undertake a two year effort to update the Vision to reflect these more rigorous requirements.

Then, after the 1993 RTP update, PSRC’s leadership felt that Vision 2020 needed to incorporate comprehensive plans from the local and county governments and that it needed to incorporate regional and state transportation planning policies. PSRC decided that it was time to bring everything under one roof – to coordinate land use planning and link it with transportation planning. This was the genesis of a two year effort that resulted in the 1995 update to Vision 2020, which is still in effect today.

More recently, a State Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation was formed that, among other things, encouraged more long term, integrated planning for transportation. Besides being part of the regular RTP update, Destination 2030 took on its broader reach partly as a result of the recommendations of that Commission.

2. Regional characteristics

The Puget Sound Regional Council is the MPO for four counties, 82 cities, three ports, and two state agencies. In the Puget Sound region, 1,170 square miles are urbanized and accommodate 3 million residents -- 88% of the State’s population. The Puget Sound region grows about 1.5% annually.

The region has a rich history of interjurisdictional cooperation and planning. In Snohomish County, for example, voluntarily regional meetings were underway in the late 1980’s. After the Washington State Growth Management Act was passed in 1990, the group became Snohomish County Tomorrow and serves as an advisory group to the Puget Sound Regional Council. In addition, the King County

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Growth Management Planning Council, another important county organization, provides the Regional Council with policy and funding recommendations.

3. The players

Because Vision 2020 and, now, Destination 2030 are so integrated with the MPO institutionally, it's difficult to call out individual players who have led the charge. However, the work of the Puget Sound Regional Council is fairly strongly supported by everyone from the Governor to local elected officials. Many of the Regional Councils' strongest supporters are national speakers on growth issues.

The Governor recently praised Destination 2030, saying "you crafted a long-term, strategic transportation plan that truly complements and dovetails with the recommendations of the state Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation. And you did so the old fashioned way: one City, one chamber, and one community interest at a time."

It is worth mentioning that there is a clear ethic about community input in planning that surfaces in everything that Regional Council generates – public engagement is simply part of their operating culture and philosophy. This has helped bring a broad range of political support that is often missing for the work of MPOs.

4. Funding sources and levels

Again, because these efforts are so integrated with the MPO, teasing out particular funds spent on "visioning" is difficult. PSRC did receive funding for Destination 2030 from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and the Washington Department of Transportation.

5. Data availability/gathering

PSRC seems to continually be providing analysis and modeling to assess, monitor, or develop various plans.

As part of developing Destination 2030, PSRC developed three alternative transportation planning scenarios. Using performance measures such as VMT and transit usage, PSRC also calculated a **per person price tag** for each of the transportation planning scenarios. That proved to be instrumental in helping citizens evaluate the costs and benefits of each scenario.

Following the input from community workshops and meetings, PSRC also developed System Performance measures for the preferred transportation plan, including transit ridership and congestion management.

One particular challenge in developing Destination 2030 was its 30-year timeframe – longer than most RTPs. This caused them to be especially rigorous about their modeling, while understanding that certain assumptions have to be made.

In an effort to keep information available to the public at all times, PSRC made GIS mapping and technical data available online. It also maintains an internal Information Center that is both staffed and available for appointments.

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6. Major phases/components

Vision 2020

Vision 2020 began in 1987 by simply asking citizens some hard questions about future growth: Where and how do we want to grow? How do we provide both adequate and affordable housing? How will people get to where they need to go? How can we protect the environment?

This not only created a powerful regional dialogue, but substantively informed their scenario development efforts. A number of alternative growth and mobility scenarios were developed and analyzed. In 1990, following an extensive public participation process that also included staff from local governments and local elected officials, the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSRC's predecessor) adopted the plan.

Vision 2020 is now the planning "bible" for the community. The strategy for managing future growth in the region is mapped out in eight categories: 1) urban growth areas, 2) contiguous and orderly development, 3) regional capital facilities, 4) housing, 5) rural areas, 6) open space, 7) economic development, and 8) transportation. Vision 2020 establishes planning principles for each of the categories.

The subsequent updates, while informed by particulars such as new State legislation or pending RTP updates (as detailed in Section 1) were informed by similarly broad public outreach processes.

Public Participation Plan

Partly as a result Vision 2020 development, a broad public participation plan was adopted in May 1994, which specifically governs all public outreach activities by the MPO. It lays out a series of principles followed by procedure requirements describing the 'required' outreach for activities undertaken by the PSRC.

Destination 2030

In 1999, in preparation for the RTP update, the PSRC conducted an attitudinal survey to determine the transportation, land use and technology sensitivities in their region. The MPO wanted to get a 'pulse' of the region and find out where the pressure points were in the community following the Vision 2020 effort. The survey indicated congestion relief should be the number one priority for the Regional Council.

On the data front, Destination 2030 is the first time that all City, County, transit agency, and State transportation plans were analyzed together to determine a much more complete baseline analysis, future projections, and trend information. The plan is to make Destination 2030 a sort of "master plan" that will inform all those other documents.

With the information derived from the survey and additional data analysis, PSRC developed three transportation planning scenarios, with performance measures, and presented them to the public. As is common in visioning efforts, the public did not overwhelmingly support one scenario over the other, instead choosing programs associated with each scenario. Importantly, the public indicated a willingness to pay for transportation improvements.

Eventually, this was hammered into what is now the final version of the document, which is quite visionary from a transportation planning perspective. It points out the fallacy of the "roads vs. transit" debate, it highlights the need for political leadership, it is honest about costs, and it is blunt about the lack of a "magic bullet" to solve transit in the region. It also breaks out implementation into short, intermediate, and long term timeframes. Finally, it is explicitly integrated with growth management, is

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based on Vision 2020, and calls out implementation responsibilities from the personal to the regional governance levels.

7. Results

There are many derivatives from the Vision 2020 process – monitoring committees, performance monitoring committees, growth management committees, and so on. There are some interesting efforts that have taken on their own identity.

Transit Station Communities (TSC) is a unit within the Regional Council that focuses on teaching people about Transit Oriented Development and how a community benefits from joint land use and transportation planning. The TSC project is funded by the Federal Highway Administration and is a Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program – creative funding sources that allow the Regional Council to explore smart growth principles and translate them into projects.

In addition, the MPO gives **Vision 2020 Awards** annually to projects that best exemplify the principles laid out in the vision document. They are quite competitive and cities see them as a way to showcase good projects within their communities. They are also a way for the MPO to keep Vision 2020 current in the minds of local elected officials and others.

Finally, partly as a result of Washington's Growth Management Act, a variety of plans across the region, such as local general plans, transportation plans, and growth management plans have to conform with Vision 2020. This also helps the principles embedded within it to be operationalized across the region.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

It's difficult to find initial obstacles that had to be overcome as their attitudes about visioning, public engagement and the like have existed for so long.

The primary obstacle at this point is keeping the vision vital, which they do in a variety of ways as detailed by this document. The most important way they keep it current is simply by continuing to talk about it as the basis for everything they do.

Strengths

Political leadership – The broad level of political support for PSRC has given the organization the ability to chart out a strong agenda for regional cooperation and planning. As mentioned previously, advocates such as the Governor and other high-ranking elected officials have provided the political capital to move their planning effort forward.

Agency philosophy – PSRC is itself a very unique MPO. Rather than think of itself as a regulatory agent, it considers itself a partner and a conduit between municipalities, the state and citizens, as it continually asks its customers (the residents) their values and needs.

Funding secured – The ability of PSRC to support the community outreach and data research necessary to reach their planning goals was critical. The funding support, derived through political backing, allowed PSRC to develop Vision 2020 and Destination 2030 plans to the fullest extent.

High communication effort with citizenry – The PSRC prides itself on the extensive effort it has made to inform and communicate with its residents. In the 1994 Public Participation Plan for the Regional Council, seven strong principles are identified as reasons why people need to be engaged

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in the planning process. The fact that very detailed policies for public outreach are laid out – and followed – is testament to this fact. A more telling testament to the effectiveness of their public outreach effort: in the 1999 transportation survey, with almost 6,000 respondents, nearly 60% stated they were “aware that the region has a Long Range Transportation Plan.”

Weaknesses

It's somewhat difficult to find weaknesses only in that the vision is so integrated with the agency and the process for developing the vision happened so long ago.

9. Conclusion and Lessons for SCAG

Vision 2020 and Destination 2030 are both important documents – one because it has served as such a valuable foundation and the other because it shows what can be done with a “regulatory” document. Some lessons:

Public engagement = stability – Vision 2020 has one lesson that's loud and clear – listen to the public, write down their ideas give it back to them, and listen again. The interest and support for revising Vision 2020 in 1993 and again in 1995 demonstrates the strength of the document. Unlike other places where the attitude is ‘out with the old, in with the new’, the Puget Sound Regional Council stayed with the tried and true; revising made sense when the material they were working with was based on solid, technical analysis backed by citizen input and participation.

Think outside the box – Destination 2030 is, technically, the RTP update. However, with its inclusion of growth management principles, regional cooperation, a much longer timeline, and as much focus on principles as specifics, it points the way to a very different future. It is an object lesson in the potential for these documents.

Foundational work pays later rewards – Destination 2030 was completed with the explicit goal of keeping the region eligible for federal transportation funds. Given the situation in this region, it is worthwhile to appreciate that the underpinnings of Destination 2030 are vested in Vision 2020. The vision for the region, generated from extensive citizen input, came before the development of the transportation planning document, which made developing Destination 2030 much smoother.

It's a journey, not a destination – This point has been made with other efforts, but it's worth repeating. PSRC did not see development of the vision as a process that would result in a document and then be “done.” Of course the visioning process itself had a beginning and an end, but once adopted, it became part of the culture of the agency. One staff member is solely devoted to implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the impacts of Vision 2020. As mentioned earlier, awards are given, every planning document must explicitly state its connection to the Vision, and the Vision continues to be championed by local elected officials. This is the goal to be striving for.

Vision 2020 and its successors – most currently and notably, Destination 2030 – are an example of the potential for a vision to underpin and provide a foundation for so many other activities within an MPO. Not to stretch the point, but it's analogous to giving birth – actually having the child is a process (and sometimes an ordeal!), but once the child is born, it becomes an integral part of our lives. Such is the relationship of the vision to the MPO in Puget Sound. Will we follow suit?

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Region 2020 – San Diego Summary

What They're Doing

The San Diego MPO has developed Region 2020, a “smart growth” based future growth alternative with five primary elements that has been adopted by the Regional Council. They are currently attempting to build support for implementing it.

Who's Leading It

This is solely an MPO-led effort, with stakeholder groups merely “signing on” in support.

Website Address of the Effort

[Region 2020](#)

The Process in a Nutshell

1. *Adopting an Alternative Forecast.* SANDAG has already adopted an internally-developed “smart growth” alternative forecast, using aggressive transit-oriented development assumptions. Region 2020 is an attempt to educate and involve stakeholders, the private sector, and the public in actualizing that vision.
2. *Support Building.* SANDAG began with a General Assembly with over 400 attendees to draw attention to the “vision.” They also made over 40 presentations around the region and held five subregional workshops. They also produced a variety of public information materials and held focus groups to help sharpen their message and outreach.
3. *Reassessment.* After the initial round of public outreach, it was clear that more foundation laying was needed. SANDAG is now finalizing a “Growth Policies” document to highlight the potential for – and consequences of – limiting growth. They are also continuing to build support for the effort and plan to “relaunch” the effort in the fall of this year.

Results

1. *Preferred Future Growth Scenario.* Although it was developed internally with little or no outside input, the “smart growth” oriented future growth scenario is a valuable jumping off point for discussion and public input.
2. *Livability Report Card.* This document highlights citizen opinions about the state of the region's “livability” on a number of fronts both today and ten years ago. SANDAG then compares those perceptions to actual trends.
3. *Growth Policies Study.* This report looks at the potential for limiting growth and discusses the consequences for doing so.

Lessons

1. *Develop a clear process and communicate it.* Although SANDAG seems to know what Region 2020 is and where it is going, they have not communicated this to a very great extent, making stakeholders and others leery of signing on.

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2. *Don't be afraid to stop.* SANDAG could have kept charging forward in the face of public skepticism, but they recognized some needed changes and are taking the time to build the foundation they need to successfully move forward. This is rare.
3. *Top down doesn't work without leadership.* Visions developed from the bottom up have the benefit of a broad constituency, which gives decision makers an incentive to make different decisions. Visions developed from the top down need strong leadership from credible, high profile individuals. Without that, they will have a difficult time achieving credibility.

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REGION 2020 SAN DIEGO

It's a vision ... it's a report card ... what is it?

The San Diego Association of Governments has been determining how their region can grow differently in the future for some time. A "smart growth"-oriented Regional Growth Management Strategy was developed and adopted by SANDAG in 1993 ... and languished for a number of years during the recession. In 1998, SANDAG decided to update the document, which became the Region 2020 process. However, the effort has suffered from a perceived lack of direction and disagreement over basic assumptions. Report cards on the state of the region have been issued, benchmarks have been developed, and actions to achieve those benchmarks have been suggested. Yet, a coherent "vision" beyond alternative land use scenarios is tough to come by, and the action items are vague and voluntary. SANDAG is good at framing the issue, and has done a fair amount of public outreach, but it's unclear where this effort is going ... and they may not even know themselves. So what is Region 2020? One idea: an example of a cautious MPO that sees a path in front of it, but is not certain how to traverse it.

1. What initiated the Visioning effort? When did it begin?

As the result of a 1988 ballot measure, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) developed a "Regional Growth Management Strategy," which was adopted by their Board in 1993. However, with the recession soon thereafter, "managing growth" became less important than attracting it, and the document disappeared for a while.

Then, in the mid-'90s, SANDAG discovered, through its normal forecasting process, that the housing elements of the General Plans of all the cities in the region, if fully implemented, would not accommodate all the projected growth for the region. Because SANDAG's research arm was always highly regarded internally, this received a fair amount of attention.

In addition, a number of other efforts were gaining steam. The City and County of San Diego were updating their General Plans, the County had formed a Smart Growth Coalition (essentially consisting of issue-based working groups coming up with recommendations), a high profile "Millennium Project" report was published highlighting smart growth in San Diego, Coronado hosted a national Smart Growth conference, transit agencies were updating their long range plans and, importantly, media coverage of the issue was growing.

As a result of all this, SANDAG decided to streamline and update their original growth management strategy, which became the Region 2020 process.

2. Regional characteristics

SANDAG covers a fairly well-defined region – they consist of only San Diego County, which is bordered by the ocean to the west, Camp Pendleton to the north, the Mexican border to the south, and desert to the east. The County has 18 cities and 92 unincorporated communities with about 2.8 million people.

The population is expected to grow approximately 33% by 2020. While more confined, SANDAG faces many of the same issues as the SCAG region with increasing congestion, decreasing availability of housing stock, and deteriorating infrastructure. San Diego's political climate around this

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issue is somewhat more well developed in that voters have more recently passed transportation bond measures and San Diego's downtown has gone under a well-publicized transformation. However, area residents share many of the same perceptions about the ability to "stop" growth and, if anything, are more concerned that planning for growth is the same as incentivizing it.

3. The players

Region 2020 has been solely an MPO-led effort. An internal Committee of local elected officials and Planning Directors govern the process and MPO staff does most of the analysis and outreach. The MPO has retained consultants to develop the brand identity of the effort (name, logo, etc.), coordinate focus groups, and help facilitate some of the public meetings. However, SANDAG staff does most of the outreach and presentations about Region 2020.

A number of organizations and individuals have endorsed Region 2020, but it is mostly "in name only" – while SANDAG has attempted to enlist high-level private sector support for Region 2020, that effort has been fruitless so far. The leadership of SANDAG is supportive of the effort, but that has not yet translated into external support.

4. Funding sources and levels

The MPO has a budget of \$400,000 for the Region 2020 effort for this fiscal year, and expects that it will continue at that level on a yearly basis. That includes staff time, approximately \$125,000 for consultants, and some other expenses such as sponsoring forums and the like. That does not include graphics and printing expenses, which have been fairly extensive because SANDAG has printed a number of high-quality reports as part of the effort. An exact account of what they've spent to date is not available.

5. Data availability/gathering

SANDAG has used data as a strong underpinning of Region 2020, but it has been internally generated. SANDAG's initial analysis of the regional General Plans was part of their regular forecasting practices, and subsequent development of "smart growth"-oriented alternatives was performed internally, with the cooperation of local Planning Directors. These alternatives were developed deterministically, with various assumptions being applied using internal models.

An important point about the data: while the credibility of SANDAG's data and research department were an important element in building internal support for developing alternative future growth scenarios (once it was determined that it wasn't being adequately planned for), it is skepticism about data and growth projections that have made it difficult for this project to get off the ground – local elected officials and residents simply do not believe the region is going to grow as much as SANDAG projects, and are unwilling to plan for it otherwise. Therefore, continuing to provide data that helps bolster their projections is an important element in their effort, including the recently published Growth Policies report, which looks at ways to limit growth and the consequences for doing so.

6. Major phases/components

Developing the Vision (mid '90s)

In the mid '90s, an internal forecast and analysis showed that the General Plans of the cities in the region did not adequately accommodate SANDAG's future growth projections. This was an internal eye-opener, which led to the development of three other alternatives for "smarter" growth. Working with local Planning Directors, they developed future growth scenarios explicitly based on transit-oriented development, using a series of progressively more aggressive assumptions for how much future growth could be oriented around existing and future transit corridors and hubs.

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Once developed, the Board adopted the most aggressive strategy for future growth ... but didn't do much besides adopting it. This, combined with the overall climate around growth, prompted SANDAG staff to resurrect the Regional Growth Management Plan and think about how to update in order to determine how to implement this new growth alternative.

Outreach/Coalition Building (1998-99)

In 1998, as part of SANDAG's effort to update the Growth Management Plan, they decided that more cohesion and identification was needed for the effort, which led to the development of "Region 2020." However, though the effort got a name and a logo, it did not get much more definition.

SANDAG then began a variety of outreach and coalition building activities in 1999. A **General Assembly** launched the effort, attracting over 400 people and 40 elected officials. SANDAG staff also made over **40 presentations** on Region 2020 to a variety of groups throughout the region. SANDAG also invited a variety of stakeholder groups to co-host five **subregional workshops** throughout the region.

In addition, SANDAG produced a variety of **public information materials**, including brochures, briefing kits, a video, a PowerPoint presentation, media kits, and a Region 2020 website. Finally, **focus groups** were conducted to test awareness of regional growth management issues. The results of the focus groups were used to prepare the subregional workshops.

Reassessment/Study (2000-present)

After the first round of public workshops and studies, it became clear that more foundation laying was needed for the effort. In early 2000, a number of work plans to continue the Region 2020 effort were proposed, but they were too ambitious and suggested an unrealistically short timeframe. Instead, SANDAG has taken a step back to address some of the most pressing issues.

First, as a response to the most pervasive public feedback – questions about the inevitability of growth – they are undertaking a "Growth Policies" study, which will attempt to investigate various options for limiting growth and the consequences of doing so. The first draft has just been completed.

They are also continuing to publish reports assessing the region's livability and identifying strategies to increase quality of life. This includes, among other things, a "Citizen's Report Card", wherein they asked people to grade the current state of various indicators of quality of life, including transportation, economic development, environment, and housing, and compare that with their perceptions of ten years ago. They then compared these citizen perceptions to the actual data, applied benchmarks (with public input) to those indicators, and suggested some basic actions to make progress towards those benchmarks. Interestingly, SANDAG has effectively turned this particular publication into their annual "State of the Region" report.

SANDAG is continuing to garner outside support for the effort, but they have had little luck establishing a public/private partnership. They will publish an updated report card later this year and hold another Region 2020 Summit, at which they will unveil an updated strategy and action plan this fall.

7. Results

Livability Indicators/Goals

SANDAG has developed useful indicators of various aspects of livability and numerical goals for each indicator. In addition, they propose action items for achieving the goal; the actions are fairly general and encourage action on the part of cities, but at least the issues are clearly spelled out.

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Report Card

The report card is a very useful tool for assessing resident attitudes about the region's current state and their opinions about trends over time (they had people grade not only current conditions as well as their perception of conditions ten years ago). This is not only a helpful public outreach tool, but it also allows SANDAG to compare those perceptions to actual data and either reinforce or correct misperceptions.

Growth Policies Report

In response to citizen feedback at various public forums, SANDAG is assessing the potential for limiting growth along with the consequences of doing so. If done well, this will be a very useful document to correct widespread misperceptions and help hone their message for the next stage of public outreach.

8. Lessons learned

Obstacles

Citizen Skepticism – SANDAG thought they were doing public workshops to get input on how the region should best accommodate projected future growth. What they got instead was skepticism that the region would grow by that much at all and questions on how to “stop” it. This is a common query, but it was especially strong in this effort. They are presumably overcoming this with their “Growth Policies” report.

Competition – While all the activity around “smart growth” in the region was useful for building initial momentum behind their effort, it was also difficult to distinguish the Region 2020 effort. In addition, San Diego has also been grappling with legislative proposals to combine the planning functions of various State agencies. That effort has gone through a number of iterations and is currently known as the Regional Government Efficiency Committee (RGEC, pronounced “Regis”). Many people who would normally be involved are staying on the sidelines until they see what happens there. SANDAG overcame the early “competition” by simply persisting, by branding the effort, and by attempting to take a longer view than the more immediate outlook inherent in conferences and the like. They have not overcome the high profile competition from RGEC.

Strengths

Analysis – SANDAG has performed not only concrete, but perhaps more importantly, user-friendly analysis of the various issues involved. Their comparison of perceptions to actual trends, their indication of the real-world benefits of “smart growth” policies, and their emphasis on making livability tangible have all been valuable message shaping tools.

Benchmarking – SANDAG has developed benchmarks for each of their livability categories and has also developed actions for achieving the benchmarks. This helps people focus on achievable outcomes and helps maintain momentum.

Persistence – SANDAG is two years in to what was supposed to be a two-year process, yet they are still getting stakeholder and community support, performing preliminary studies, retooling the overall strategy, and taking the time to lay the needed foundation. This is the kind of persistence that is needed in the face of the inherent uncertainty of visioning efforts.

Quality of Outreach Materials – Many times, “policy and planning” agencies give short shrift to the design and readability of their materials, dismissing that as “style” over “substance.” However, SANDAG’s outreach materials are very readable, user-friendly, and clear. They take style issues seriously – which is important to the substance of public outreach because the materials will reach a

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much wider audience if they are easy to understand and well-designed. This should not be underestimated.

Weaknesses

Internalization – No one outside the MPO is fundamentally involved with this process. Groups have signed on to the principles, but the MPO has not been able to set up any sort of externally oriented, public/private Steering Committee to give the effort credibility. In addition, the effort has been very top down and expert driven to this point – SANDAG staff works with various city staffs to develop scenarios and do the modeling and then publishes the results as a “smart growth” alternative. This allows them to develop the scenarios faster, but with no public or stakeholder involvement, they languish for lack of support.

Lack of direction/clarity – Many references are made in their materials to the “Region 2020 Strategy”, but that “strategy” seems to consist of improving conditions in five broad areas: economic prosperity, transportation, housing, environment, and fiscal reform. It is unclear exactly what the strategy is, or even if there is one. In addition, it is unclear where the effort is heading. Important process stages or an overall timeline have not been developed, or at least they have not been published publicly. Therefore, it’s difficult for outside stakeholders to know what they are getting involved with.

Suggestions, not help – Many of the “action items” that accompany their livability indicators are somewhat vague: “local governments should work collaboratively ... to encourage the growth of our regional industrial clusters”; “officials should prioritize funding for projects that integrate our land use and transportation systems...”; “local elected officials should maintain or increase residential densities in their general plans near existing or planned transit stations...”. These are helpful suggestions for determining what action needs to be taken, but there is no implementing mechanism. They do not indicate a forum or process or any other method for seeing that any of these things happen, even voluntarily. Therefore, they are quite easy to ignore. However, the MPO is attempting to identify resources to incentivize local jurisdictions to implement smart growth policies.

No leadership – No one is championing this effort. No elected officials are spearheading it (though they sit on the Committee), the MPO’s Executive Director has been an internal champion but has not been able to translate that support to the broader community, and certainly no private sector leader or leaders are carrying the message of this effort into the community. Without individual, strong leadership, the effort will have a very difficult time obtaining broad support. SANDAG is trying to identify and involve this leadership, but have had little luck to this point.

9. Conclusion and Most Pertinent Lessons for SCAG

SANDAG is undertaking an important effort to determine how their region should grow in the future and attempting to garner a wide variety of stakeholder and public support for an alternative growth vision. In addition, they are using important symbolic language about the importance of livability and setting goals for attaining it. However, the effort is unfocused and seems to be proceeding in fits and starts. Some lessons for SCAG:

Develop a process and follow it – One of the reasons SANDAG’s effort has been so schizophrenic is that they seem to have little idea of how the effort would proceed when they started. They initially thought it would be a public relations effort around the regional growth development plan, but it quickly became clear that the “plan” was nothing more than policy prioritization and that more foundation laying was needed.

If it’s broken, fix it! – One lesson SANDAG seems to have taken to heart is going back and retooling various components before attempting to flesh out the visioning effort. The Growth Policies study and

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the fact that a new kickoff “Region 2020 Summit” will take place this fall when the first one took place two years ago is evidence of that. If this effort is going to get off the ground, their willingness to retrace this step will be one reason why.

Establish a broad, public/private Steering Committee – Very few stakeholders, business leaders, nonprofit heads, or others who can give credibility to visioning efforts have a stake in this process. Therefore, the MPO has no outside entity helping them carrying the message to other groups in the region, to the media, or to individual communities.

Find the leadership – If the local elected officials sitting on the Committee do not champion the effort, then others need to be found who will. There is no public voice of the effort – it simply sits as one of SANDAG’s “projects,” albeit an important one internally. SANDAG staff estimates that 75% of the region’s local elected officials have not even heard of it. The new Mayor of San Diego is speaking publicly about “smart growth,” and may carve a role as a regional champion, but he has not, as of yet, tied this to the MPO’s effort. For Region 2020 to last, individual leaders with independent credibility need to champion it.

Listen to the feedback – Often, efforts like these get feedback but, if it doesn’t fit into their work plan (or world view), they simply ignore it, chalking up those people as “NIMBYs” (or worse). SANDAG went back and is addressing these concerns which should help bolster their credibility during phase two of this evolving process.

SANDAG’s Region 2020 effort, for all its public outreach and analysis so far, is really just getting off the ground. Mistakes have been made ... but attempts are being made to address them, with varying levels of success. The MPO seems persistent in determining how to move forward, and a wide variety of stakeholder groups have indicated at least nominal support for the effort. If SANDAG is able to translate that support into action, broaden its base of involvement, and address the concerns involved so far, they may be able to develop a specific, actionable vision.